the weekly Standard

APRIL 3, 2006

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THE WOES OF THE OLD WORLD
GERARD BAKER • HENRIK BERING
JOSEPH FITCHETT

My Dinner with Jack

The Jamboree in Jamba, the making of 'Red Scorpion,' and other tales of the Abramoff era

BY MARK HEMINGWAY

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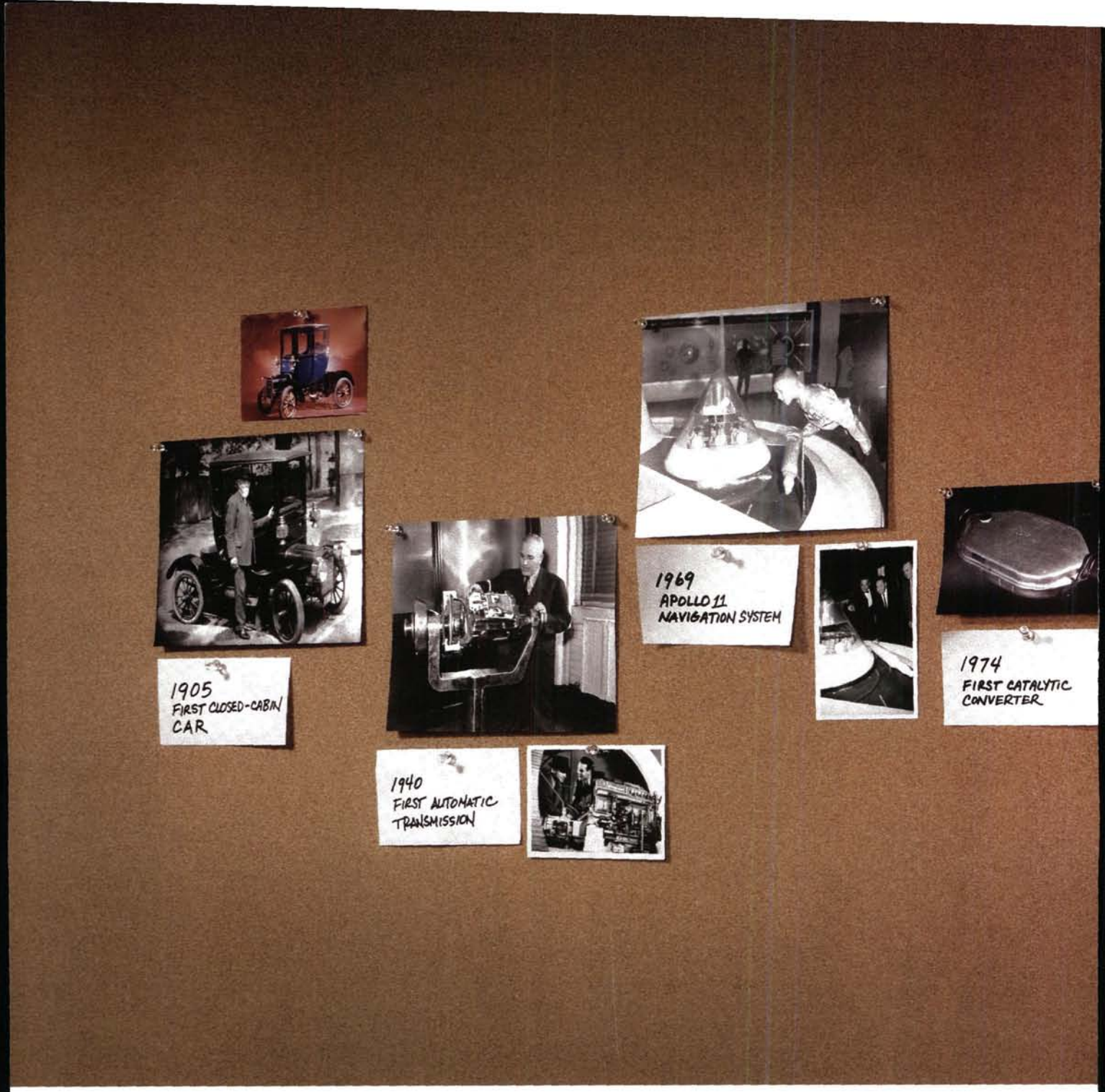

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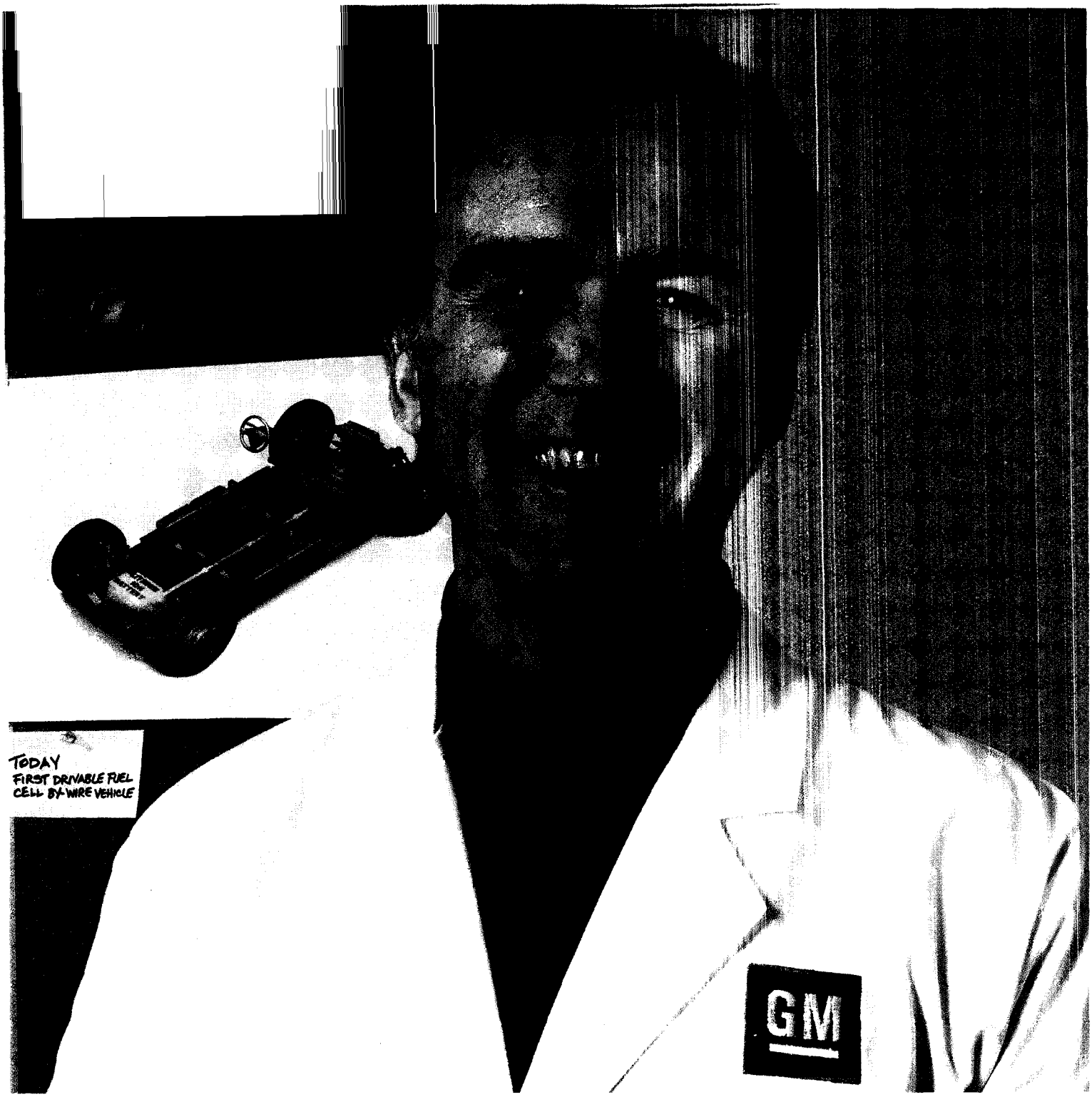

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But Is It Good for Harvard?

The time has long passed when association with Harvard University conferred an imprimatur of presumed seriousness or even common sense on the output of its scholars. Still, it comes as a shock to read a polemic as vulgar as the "working paper" penned earlier this month by the academic dean of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, Stephen M. Walt, and John J. Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago, carrying the title "The Israel Lobby and American Foreign Policy." A shorter version of this travesty of scholarship appeared in the *London Review of Books*. It purports to explain President Bush's foreign policy, especially in the Middle East, as being almost entirely determined by a nefarious "Israel Lobby," which supposedly dragged this country into the Iraq war at the behest of Tel Aviv. The effort has been correctly identified as gross propaganda by the excellent reporters at the *New York Sun* and the *Forward*. The latter noted in an editorial:

> "The core of the Lobby," [Mearsheimer and Walt] write, "is comprised of American Jews who make a significant effort in their daily lives to bend U.S. foreign policy so that it advances Israel's interests." To be sure, they hasten to add, "not all Jewish-Americans are part of the Lobby." One 2004 survey found that "roughly 36 percent of Jewish-Americans said they were either 'not very' or 'not at all' emotionally attached to Israel." Good news: No more than 64% of American Jews are out to undermine America.

According to Mearsheimer and Walt, the Lobby (they always use a capital *L*) is so vast it unites not just Jews but "prominent Christian evangelicals like Gary Bauer, Jerry Falwell, Ralph Reed, and Pat Robertson, as well as Dick Armey and Tom DeLay," not to mention a group they charmingly dub "neoconservative gentiles," such as "John Bolton, the late *Wall Street Journal* editor Robert Bartley, former Secretary of Education William Bennett, former U.N. Ambassador Jeanne Kirkpatrick, and columnist George Will." The Lobby also infected the policies of the Clinton administration and dictates policy not just at magazines like this one, but also at the *New York Times* and most think tanks in Washington. In short, anyone of significance who has ever disagreed with Mearsheimer and Walt's neorealist foreign policy prescriptions is suspect, especially the Jews.

In real life, of course, the individuals and groups they identify have divergent and in some cases mutually hostile views about the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. Hawks when it comes to the Middle East tend to be hawkish about the rest of the world, too. Many of the Iraq interventionists also backed intervention on behalf of Bosnian Muslims, not to mention U.S. aid and comfort to Tibetan Buddhists, Confucians in Taiwan, and animists in Rwanda. Israeli views, for that matter, are all over the map about what the Bush administration is and should be up to in the Middle East and Iraq. Honest scholars of U.S. policy in the Middle East will be amused to learn that the word OPEC appears only once in the 83-page paper and that "AIPAC and its allies . . . have no serious opponents in the lobbying world." Men perspire and ladies glow, goes the adage. So Arabs, we suppose, don't lobby, they just bestow gifts, like the $20 million Saudi prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Bin Abd al-Aziz Al-Saud recently gave to the Kennedy School.

But really: Scholars who uncritically offer as evidence for their thesis a malicious blog by the *Nation*'s Eric Alterman purporting to identify 61 "columnists and commentators who can be counted upon to support Israel reflexively and without qualification" hardly merit a serious rebuttal. Mearsheimer and Walt are following a well-worn, yet still slippery trail. As our contributor Stephen Schwartz likes to say, there is never anything new in the inventory at the Anti-Jew Store. ♦

Illinois GOP Update

Last week brought two pieces of much-needed good news for the beleaguered Illinois state Republican party—reduced as it's been to minority status in both houses of the legislature and a single statewide office, and humiliated over the past five months by the federal racketeering and mail fraud trial of former governor George Ryan.

Item number one: For the second straight Thursday, an apparently deadlocked jury was sent home for a long weekend without having found Ryan guilty. Could've been worse, right?

Item number two: Preliminary results from last Tuesday's 3rd Congressional District primary (southwest Chicago and adjacent suburbs) indicate that its GOP nominee will be retired entertainer Raymond Wardingley, better known in the area as Spanky the Clown. Which is just what it sounds like: bright red fright wig, floppy shoes, and all.

Defying what's become conventional wisdom among GOP strategists this election cycle, Wardingley's defeated opponent, 58-year-old Chicago insurance broker Art Jones, had openly embraced Iraq as a central campaign issue—urging that our troops be withdrawn and the president impeached for conspiring with his "corrupt, neoconservative, kosher-approved cohorts" to take us to war on behalf of "a foreign nation [Israel]." The appeal of this otherwise arresting message may have been limited, local insiders report, by the fact of

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the candidate's past membership in the National Socialist White People's party. In the end, only about 30 percent of 3rd District Republican primary voters—some 4,500 of them—proved willing to cast their lot with a neo-Nazi. Believe it or not, that's the good news. ♦

Prince Charming

Like many, THE SCRAPBOOK had hoped that Prince Charles would spend his post-Diana years galloping his horsy second wife off into the sunset. Not so much out of consideration for his personal happiness, but so that we wouldn't have to hear from him again. No such luck.

Freed from the constraints of starring in his long-running tabloid soap opera, Charles has found new life as a scold and Islamophile. Rarely passing up a chance to decry Western materialism, he prefers to pay lip service to the less consumer-driven, living-in-darkness lifestyle of the Middle East. He's even gone so far as to greet houseguests, such as actor Al Pacino, in flowing Muslim robes—the better to stay loose when hanging out at his 5 million pound Highgrove estate, studying the Koran.

Last week, Charles started a new leg of his World Aggravation Tour, this time in Cairo, where he delivered his "Unity in Faith" speech at Al-Azhar University, while picking up an honorary doctorate. Now, it seems, the man who complained to *60 Minutes* about the difficulty of staying relevant, the man who has brought joy to tens as patron of everything from the Border Stick Dressers Association to the Donatella Flick Conducting Competition to the National Hedgelaying Society, has met his highest calling: that of diversity trainer.

While Charles's speech lightly swatted his audience on the knuckles for religious extremism, he mainly stayed safe, couching everything in the Nerf-bat phraseology that middle managers in office parks the world over inflict on their charges in order to satisfy Human Resources requirements. He talked of the need for "unity through diversity," of what we can "learn from Islam that will help us reintegrate with nature," and "the danger that comes of our failure to listen and to respect what is precious and sacred to others." A little more sensitivity on the part of the West, and there apparently wouldn't have been those deaths in the cartoon riots, not to mention all that burnt Danish cheese.

Some of our Muslim brothers, however, saw Prince Charles for what he is: an inveterate putterer. When news broke that he was collecting an honorary doctorate, Abdel Azim el-Mataani, a lecturer in Arabic literature at the university, couldn't understand why: "All that Prince Charles did is to say that Islam is the most widespread religion in the world, and that is a reality, not a discovery by the prince. That is not enough to receive such a prestigious award." Welcome to our hell, Abdel. If you don't like Prince Charles feigning expertise in your subject, get in line behind the Hedgelayers and Border Stick Dressers.

Meanwhile, the prince has won a lawsuit to keep his journal out of the papers. Too bad, as the private prince shows a real spark. In the journal, he reportedly called China's leaders "appalling old waxworks." We're placing an advance order for the posthumous diaries. ♦

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Casual

Sophie's Choice

This is a dog story. You're not required to be a dog lover or a mystic to understand it. But it'll help if you at least like dogs and don't dismiss mystical occurrences out of hand.

Seven years ago, my daughter Grace got a Golden Retriever puppy and named her Sophie. We already had one dog, a feisty peekapoo named Barkley. He was named after basketball star Charles Barkley, who once called himself a "bad dog." Barkley bites. Sophie was gentle and affectionate. At age one, she made a life choice. Did she want to spend her time with other dogs or with people? She chose people. She bonded totally with Grace and her father (me) and her mother (Barbara).

A year later, Grace left for college and Barbara and I became Sophie's main companions. We loved her and she reciprocated. We took her to the beach and got great pleasure out of watching her splash in the surf and chase a ball. On spring and summer mornings, I'd sit on our deck, drinking coffee, reading the paper, and throwing a ball for Sophie. She was with Barbara or me most of every day. But at night, she still slept on a small, round bed on the floor of Grace's now-empty room. She loved us, but she missed Grace.

Until Sophie arrived, I had no idea how deeply attached one could get to a dog. In truth, I didn't understand it until two months ago when Sophie died, killed by rat poison that someone had thoughtlessly put where a dog could get at it. I won't describe how badly she suffered as her lungs filled with blood and her body slowly failed. She died in three days.

We suffered too. We cried. Every few hours, when I'd think of Sophie and her pure innocence and the cruel way she died, I'd suddenly gasp. Barbara was inconsolable. Grace, who had married right after college and moved to Tuscaloosa, Alabama, with her husband Walton, rushed home. So did our son Freddy, a junior at Auburn University.

Now comes the mystical part. The next week, Mary Ellen Tasillo, a makeup artist at Fox News I'd become friends with, sent me a condolence card. She wrote that Sophie, somewhere in the mists of the afterlife, was even now finding a new dog for us who would assuage our grief. I was touched by the sentiment.

The following morning, Grace called from Tuscaloosa. At the Target store near her home, she had encountered an abandoned dog, a mutt. When she approached, the dog had skittered away in fear. But Grace has a way with dogs. They quickly sense she's their friend. And within a half hour, she had picked up the dog, plopped her in the car and headed back to her house.

On hearing about this from Grace, my first thought was: Sophie sent us this dog. I hadn't seen the dog. All we knew was that she was a female who looked a bit like a small German shepherd with a tail that stuck straight up. She had no collar or ID. Her face looked dirty, as if she'd been digging in the ground. But it was merely the dark coloring of her snout. She seemed to be terrified of men. There was no evidence Sophie had sent the dog, but that idea lingered in my mind.

Grace learned from Target employees that the dog had been living in the parking lot for a week and had repeatedly evaded the Tuscaloosa dogcatcher. The Target folks had put out food for her to eat. Had the dogcatcher grabbed her, she'd probably have been put down in a few days unless someone had claimed her. Grace rescued her from that fate.

And as fate would also have it, Barbara and I were going that weekend to Tuscaloosa, where I was giving a speech and going to a basketball game. As it turned out, the most important part of our visit was meeting the new dog. She had been called Foxy by the friendly Target workers because she's the size and sleekness of a fox. We renamed her Annie, after Little Orphan Annie.

Annie soon warmed to Barbara, but slunk away when I approached. We figured she'd been abused by a man. It took the entire three-day weekend for her to come close to me. But she finally did, rubbing up against my legs as I softly rubbed her head and chin.

I now regard Annie as the luckiest dog in the world. She spent a week in February homeless in a parking lot. She spent a week in March in Florida on vacation with Grace and Walton, sitting in the surf and learning how to retrieve a ball.

This week, Barbara goes to Tuscaloosa to pick up Annie and drive her to our house. This is where she belongs. Sophie sent her.

Fred Barnes

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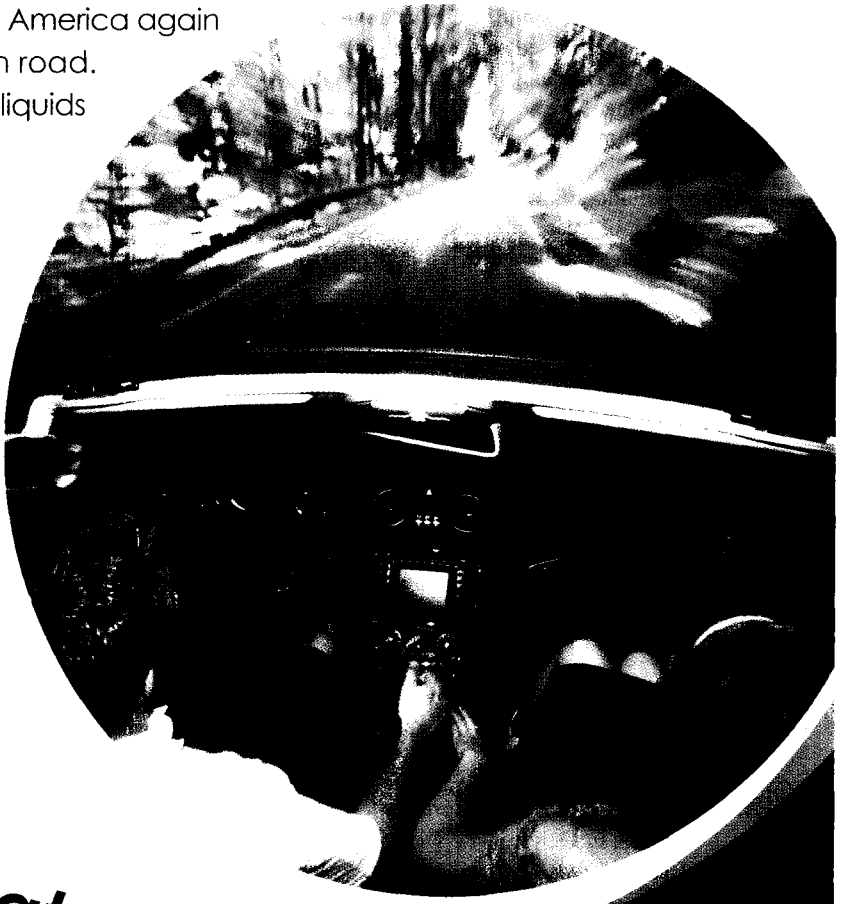

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I Spy a Terrorist

Victoria Toensing's "Constitutional Surveillance" and Stanley C. Brubaker's "The Misunderstood Fourth Amendment" (Mar. 6 / Mar. 13) both provided important clarification of the legal and constitutional issues surrounding NSA surveillance activities. It is no credit to the media in this country that it has taken this long for a coherent and well-reasoned commentary on this matter to surface. As a technologist (electrical engineer), I wonder if there is not another serious impediment to the use of probable cause to govern such surveillance.

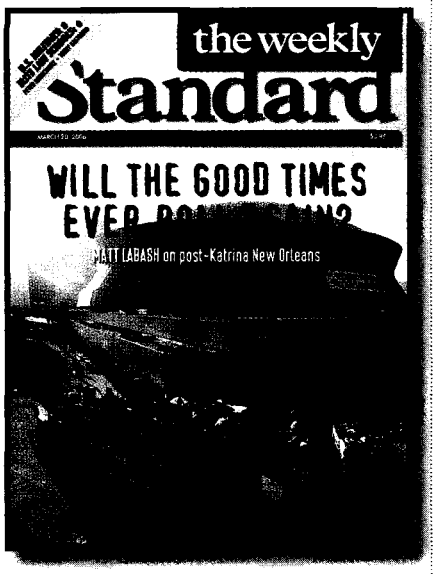
Since al Qaeda hasn't published a phone directory, and since human intelligence sources are limited, it seems likely that the NSA uses sophisticated computer processing of the *content* of all phone calls to or from a whole region to decide whether a human intelligence expert will actually listen to the message. This could include calls that terminate in the United States. It is unclear how the concept of probable cause would be applied to listening decisions based on the *content* of calls. This seems analogous to a police officer saying, "We searched the house and found guns, dope, and money so we must have had probable cause!" This form of surveillance, however, should meet the criteria of reasonableness as urged in Brubaker's excellent article on the Fourth Amendment.

Michael Madden
Talking Rock, Ga.

Danish Dispute

In "CBS Does Denmark," (Mar. 6 / Mar. 13), Henrik Bering contends that "nothing much happened" from the initial flap caused by *Jyllands-Posten*'s publication of the Muhammad cartoons on September 30 until "a delegation of fundamentalist imams from Denmark decided to tour the Middle East, stirring up hatred." This would seem to exculpate Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen of any political responsibility, despite his inept handling of the affair.

Bering omits that Danish Muslims tried to keep the controversy within Denmark's borders. On October 10, several thousand Muslims demonstrated peacefully in Copenhagen. Two



days later ambassadors from eleven Muslim countries asked to meet the prime minister to discuss growing hostility toward Muslims in Denmark. A few days later the Organization of the Islamic Conference warned Rasmussen that the "situation could escalate out of control," unless he took issue with the cartoons. On October 25, Egypt's foreign ministry asked Copenhagen to distance itself from *Jyllands-Posten*. In November and December, Danish diplomats in the Middle East reported of growing resentment at Denmark's refusal to condemn the cartoons. It is impossible to understand Rasmussen's unwillingness to respond unless one is familiar with the domestic political context. It has become quite popular in Denmark to stand up to Muslims, who tend to be confused with Islamists. The conservative government depends on support in Parliament from the anti-immigrant Danish People's party, which, contrary to Bering's views, is "ultra right-wing." Today, the DPP is the largest xenophobic party in any European country. This should trouble all people of conscience, liberals and conservatives. In the United States, a party expressing such contempt for ethnic and religious minorities would never gain traction.

Martin Burcharth
Cambridge, Mass.

Henrik Bering responds: Martin Burcharth's concern for the edification of an American audience is touching, given the fact that the paper for which he serves as the U.S. correspondent is one of the main purveyors of anti-Americanism in Denmark: *Information* is the tiny organ of the Danish left-wing intelligentsia, who, having lost the ideological struggle of the Cold War, have emerged as the proponents of third world causes and grievances, in the process becoming apologists for religious fanatics. How this agrees with the left's stance on women's rights, the death penalty, homosexuality, and all the rest is never fully explained.

Correction

Last week's "Saddam's Philippines Terror Connection" reported that the al Qaeda-linked Abu Sayyaf terror group was "founded by Osama bin Laden's brother-in-law." It should have said *funded.*

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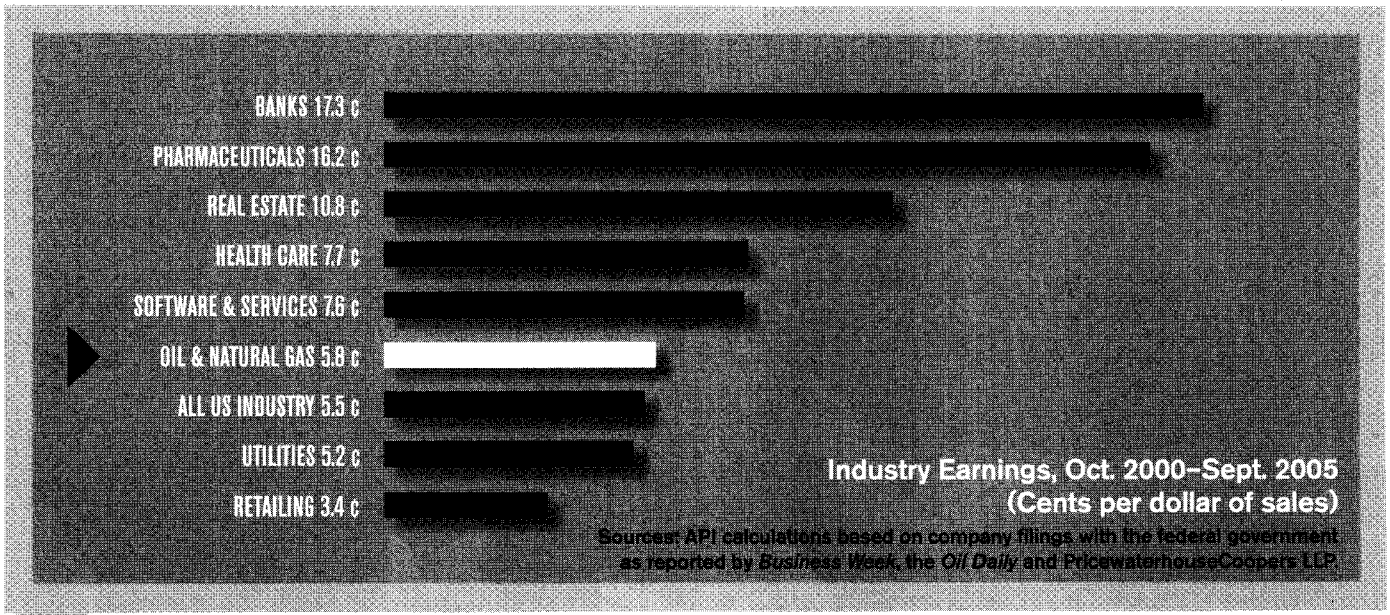

Straight talk on earnings

"**Oil company** earnings are too high."

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the weekly Standard

Rumors of Civil War

Within hours of the bombing of the al-Askariya shrine in Samarra on February 22, the media were filled with warnings that Iraq is sinking into civil war. Of course, almost any insurgency is, in a sense, a civil war, and sectarian violence has marked this insurgency from the very beginning. But the fact is that we are not facing a civil war in Iraq, with large scale military formations fighting one another along ethnic and sectarian lines. Moreover, we can very likely prevent this outcome, and, even better, make real progress toward victory.

What was striking, following the mosque bombing, was the evidence of Iraq's underlying stability in the face of attempts to undermine it. The country's vital institutions seem to have grown strong enough to withstand even the provocation of the bombing of the golden mosque.

In the wake of the bombing, it is true, militias took to the streets, and widespread sectarian violence occurred, killing and wounding many Iraqis. But not a single Iraqi political leader, including the volatile Moktada al-Sadr, endorsed an expansion of the violence. On the contrary, all joined to condemn it, to support government efforts to curtail it, and called on their followers to stop it. The Iraqi army and police were sent out to enforce curfews and stop traffic in many areas. Even in this crisis, they executed their orders, and shut down the great bulk of the violence within several days. Within a fortnight, Sunni leaders who had boycotted discussions aimed at forming a government reentered negotiations, and Iraqi politics—turbulent and nerve-wracking as it is—began again. This is not the performance of a society on the brink of civil war.

The tenacity of the Iraqi army is particularly notable. Iraqi soldiers are granted leave every month to hand-carry their salaries back home, in the absence of a reliable banking system. Especially for Shiites deployed in the Sunni triangle, this is a dangerous undertaking. Yet every month almost every Iraqi soldier "re-ups" by returning to his unit. This fact speaks volumes about the commitment of those soldiers and their professionalism in the face of the current dangers. If the situation began to spiral into real civil war, these Shiite soldiers would simply start deserting in droves, some of them to join up with Shiite militias. They are not doing so.

The continuing sectarian violence is, nevertheless, worrisome, as are the continuing tensions about the future nature and course of the Iraqi government. Together, these may ultimately undermine the foundations of stability. If the violence spreads, or other horrific terrorist attacks occur, the army and police may lose their effectiveness. The power of militias may grow beyond the point where the government and the Iraqi Security Forces can control them. Certainly, there is no basis for complacency. Iraq can still fail, with all the consequences that would follow.

President Bush has declared once again that the United States remains committed to stabilizing a democratic Iraq, and that American forces will stay there as long as necessary. He is right to reassert these commitments. The basic reason the Iraqi Security Forces and police have performed as well as they have is the presence of American troops.

U.S. forces have trained the Iraqis in how to set up checkpoints and search houses. And they have spent many hours teaching them that their loyalty is to the government and not their sect; that they must treat prisoners with respect; that they must behave professionally at all times. The continuing presence of U.S. soldiers is critical to the Iraqis' performance. The Iraqi army is holding together as well as it is because it is backed up and supported, materially and psychologically, by the U.S. Army—and by a sense that the U.S. Army will be there for quite a while to come. It is this simple: No stable and energetic U.S. Army presence—no successful Iraqi army. And without an Iraqi army, expect civil war.

Iraq is at a critical turning point, and U.S. forces are essential to helping the Iraqis get past it. Reducing the U.S. presence in the near future makes no sense, and constantly talking about reducing our forces is counterproductive and enervating. If U.S. force levels are (at least) kept steady while reliable Iraqi forces continue to increase—and the U.S. Army and Marines continue to join with the Iraqis in aggressively fighting the insurgents—the overall level of force that can be brought to bear against the insurgency, and in support of a political process that can hold the country together, will increase. And victory will then be achievable.

We trust President Bush is not going to squander this opportunity just so some congressional Republicans can say in this fall's campaign that the American military role in Iraq is decreasing. We trust that he will not permit his defense secretary to draw down troops when a major rotation occurs next month. After toughing it out through his own reelection campaign in 2004, the president, we trust, will not now capitulate to pressure and throw away the chance to succeed in Iraq.

—Frederick W. Kagan and William Kristol

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Camp Saddam

What we've learned about Iraq's terrorist training camps. BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

REPRESENTATIVE John Murtha, a Democrat from Pennsylvania, appeared on NBC's *Meet the Press* on Sunday, March 19, to evaluate the war in Iraq on its third anniversary. Murtha, a decorated veteran and longtime hawk, has become a leading spokesman for his party on the war. And on the show, he spoke of what "probably worries me the most" about the U.S. effort in Iraq. The war, said Murtha, is a diversion from the global war on terror.

"There was no terrorism in Iraq before we went there," said Murtha. "None. There was no connection with al Qaeda, there was no connection with, with terrorism in Iraq itself." This is now the conventional wisdom on Iraq and terrorism. It is wrong.

A new study from the Joint Forces Command in Norfolk, Virginia, paints quite a different picture. According to captured documents cited in the study and first reported in THE WEEKLY STANDARD in January, the former Iraqi regime was training non-Iraqi Arabs in terrorist techniques.

> Beginning in 1994, the Fedayeen Saddam opened its own paramilitary training camps for volunteers, graduating more than 7,200 "good men racing full with courage and enthusiasm" in the first year. Beginning in 1998, these camps began hosting "Arab volunteers from Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, 'the Gulf,' and Syria." It is not clear from available evidence where all of these non-Iraqi volunteers who were "sacrificing for the cause" went to ply their newfound skills. Before the summer of 2002, most volunteers went home upon the completion of training. But these camps were humming with frenzied activity in the months immediately prior to the war. As late as January 2003, the volunteers participated in a special training event called the "Heroes Attack." This training event was designed in part to prepare regional Fedayeen Saddam commands to "obstruct the enemy from achieving his goal and to support keeping peace and stability in the province."

Some of this training came under the auspices of the Iraqi Intelligence Service's "Division 27," which, according to the study, "supplied the Fedayeen Saddam with silencers, equipment for booby-trapping vehicles, [and] special training on the use of certain explosive timers. The only apparent use for all of this Division 27 equipment was to conduct commando or terrorist operations."

The publication of the Joint Forces Command study, called the "Iraqi Perspectives Project," coincides with the release by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence of several hundred documents captured in postwar Iraq. There are many more to come. Some of the documents used to complete the study have been made public as part of the ODNI effort; others have not.

It is early, but the emerging picture suggests that the U.S. intelligence community underestimated Saddam Hussein's interest in terrorism. One U.S. intelligence official, identified only as an "IC analyst" in the Senate Select Intelligence Committee report on Iraq, summarized the intelligence community's view on Iraq and terrorism with disarming candor: "I don't think we were really focused on the CT [counterterrorism] side, because we weren't concerned about the IIS [Iraqi Intelligence Service] going out and proactively conducting terrorist attacks. It wasn't until we realized that there was the possibility of going to war that we had to get a handle on that."

A report produced by the Senate Select Intelligence Committee, signed by all members of the Intelligence Committee, Democrats and Republicans, offered this withering assessment of the intelligence community's work on Iraq and terrorism:

> The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) did not have a focused human intelligence (HUMINT) collection strategy targeting Iraq's links to terrorism until 2002. The CIA had no [redacted] sources on the ground in Iraq reporting specifically on terrorism.

It wasn't just Iraq. "The CIA had no [redacted] credible reporting on the leadership of either the Iraqi regime or al Qaeda, which would have enabled it to better define a cooperative relationship, if any did in fact exist."

One document posted on the Internet by the government last week, after it was excerpted in the most recent issue of THE WEEKLY STANDARD, sheds additional light on the relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda. The internal Iraqi Intelligence memo was written at some point after January 1997 and described the efforts by the IIS to strengthen its relationships with four Saudi opposition groups. One of those groups was the "Reform and Advice Committee," run by Osama bin Laden. The *New York Times* reported that a Pentagon task force that studied the document concluded that it "appeared authentic." Last week, the investigative unit of ABC News summarized the document in a report.

> A newly released prewar Iraqi document indicates that an official representative of Saddam Hussein's government met with Osama bin Laden in Sudan on February 19, 1995, after receiving approval from Saddam Hussein. Bin Laden asked that Iraq broadcast the lectures of Suleiman al Ouda, a radical Saudi preacher, and suggested "carrying out joint operations against foreign forces" in Saudi Arabia. According to the document, Saddam's presidency was informed of the details of the meeting on March 4, 1995, and

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Saddam agreed to dedicate a program for them on the radio. The document states that further "development of the relationship and cooperation between the two parties to be left according to what's open [in the future] based on dialogue and agreement on other ways of cooperation." The Sudanese were informed about the agreement to dedicate the program on the radio.

The report then states that "Saudi opposition figure" bin Laden had to leave Sudan in July 1996 after it was accused of harboring terrorists. It says information indicated he was in Afghanistan. "The relationship with him is still through the Sudanese. We're currently working on activating this relationship through a new channel in light of his current location," it states.

The summary was followed by an "Editor's Note" assessing the contents and meaning of the document.

This document is handwritten and has no official seal. Although contacts between bin Laden and the Iraqis have been reported in the 9/11 Commission report and elsewhere (e.g., the 9/11 report states "Bin Laden himself met with a senior Iraqi intelligence officer in Khartoum in late 1994 or early 1995) this document indicates the contacts were approved personally by Saddam Hussein.

It also indicates the discussions were substantive, in particular that bin Laden was proposing an operational relationship, and that the Iraqis were, at a minimum, interested in exploring a potential relationship and prepared to show good faith by broadcasting the speeches of al Ouda, the radical cleric who was also a bin Laden mentor.

The document does not establish that the two parties did in fact enter into an operational relationship. Given that the document claims bin Laden was proposing to the Iraqis that they conduct "joint operations against foreign forces" in Saudi Arabia, it is worth noting that eight months after the meeting—on November 13, 1995—terrorists attacked Saudi National Guard Headquarters in Riyadh, killing 5 U.S. military advisers. The militants later confessed on Saudi TV to having been trained by Osama bin Laden.

John Murtha's claim—that there was no connection "with terrorism in Iraq itself"—might come as a surprise to the 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marines. In early April 2003, they found a ten-acre terrorist training camp ten miles outside of Baghdad. In an interview at the time with an embedded reporter from *Stars & Stripes*, Captain Aaron Robertson said: "We believe this is a training camp where Iraqis trained forces for the Palestine Liberation Front. This is what we would refer to as a sensitive site. This is clearly a terrorist training camp, the type Iraq claimed did not exist."

Reporter Mark Oliva described the camp in detail:

About a dozen reinforced concrete buildings line the front edge with a large parade field, concrete and steel obstacle course and even a shooting range within its confines. The camp has many modern amenities, including running and heated water, a large kitchen and electricity. Some buildings had ceiling fans and central air conditioning.

Said Captain Robertson: "It's much more sophisticated than those training camps we found in Afghanistan. It has a permanent obstacle course, which rivals anything our Marines have back at Camp Pendleton."

The Marines recovered training manuals in Arabic and English, along with rosters of Palestinians trained there. Last week, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence released an Iraqi "intelligence-coded" memo that included lists of "Palestinians trained in Iraq." In fact, Saddam Hussein boasted of his support for Palestinian terrorists and provided the families of Palestinian "martyrs" rewards of $25,000. Another captured document details those payments.

Among the documents released last week was a translation of a three-page Iraqi Intelligence memo regarding a wave of attacks to be conducted by the Saddam Fedayeen. The Office of the Director of National Intelligence website states that it cannot verify the authenticity of the posted documents, but the document appears to be similar to one described in the "Iraqi Perspectives Study." The undated document was apparently prepared in response to orders given on May 5, 1999.

According to those orders, the Fedayeen Saddam was "to start planning from now on to perform special operations (assassinations/bombings) for the centers and the traitor symbols in the fields of (London/Iran/self-ruled areas) and for coordination with the Intelligence service to secure deliveries, accommodations, and target guidance." The execution of the plan would take place in several steps. After the IIS selected 50 "fedayeen martyrs," they were to receive training at an IIS school. Those who passed the tests would be assigned targets. "The first ten will work in the European field (London). The second ten will be working in the Iranian field. The third will be working in the self-ruled field."

How many of these attacks were executed, if any? And who, exactly, were the non-Iraqi Arabs trained in Iraq beginning in 1998? Did some of them return to Iraq before the war? Are we fighting them still?

That is a distinct possibility. In an interview last month, David Dunford, a career foreign service officer who served as the chief U.S. government liaison to the post-Saddam Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Baghdad, described a document his team found in the abandoned ministry building. It was "a list of jihadists, for want of a better word, coming into Iraq from Saudi Arabia before the war," he said, unprompted. "That suggested to me that Saddam was planning the insurgency before the war."

One key element in shaping the conventional wisdom on Iraq and terrorism was the *9/11 Commission Report*, which found that Iraq and al Qaeda had no "collaborative operational relationship." But the day that report was released, Commissioner John Lehman offered this prophetic warning in an interview with THE WEEKLY STANDARD: "There may well be—and probably will be—additional intelligence coming in from interrogations and from analysis of captured records and so forth which will fill out the intelligence picture. This is not phrased as,

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nor meant to be, the definitive word on Iraqi Intelligence activities."

The "Iraqi Perspectives Project" has provided a look at Iraqi support for terrorism through its analysis of captured documents. The interrogation of the military commander of Salman Pak, a terrorist training camp outside of Baghdad, is said to add to this picture. And then there is the provocative "Summary of Evidence" on an Iraqi detainee at Guantanamo. Based in part on an interrogation of the detainee, it was produced by the U.S. government and released last year.

1. From 1987 to 1989, the detainee served as an infantryman in the Iraqi Army and received training on the mortar and rocket propelled grenades.
2. A Taliban recruiter in Baghdad convinced the detainee to travel to Afghanistan to join the Taliban in 1994.
3. The detainee admitted he was a member of the Taliban.
4. The detainee pledged allegiance to the supreme leader of the Taliban to help them take over all of Afghanistan.
5. The Taliban issued the detainee a Kalashnikov rifle in November 2000.
6. The detainee worked in a Taliban ammo and arms storage arsenal in Mazar-E-Sharif organizing weapons and ammunition.
7. The detainee willingly associated with al Qaeda members.
8. The detainee was a member of al Qaeda.
9. An assistant to Usama Bin Ladin paid the detainee on three separate occasions between 1995 and 1997.
10. The detainee stayed at the al Farouq camp in Darwanta, Afghanistan, where he received 1,000 Rupees to continue his travels.
11. From 1997 to 1998, the detainee acted as a trusted agent for Usama Bin Ladin, executing three separate reconnaissance missions for the al Qaeda leader in Oman, Iraq, and Afghanistan.
12. In August 1998, the detainee traveled to Pakistan with a member of Iraqi Intelligence for the purpose of blowing up the Pakistan, United States and British embassies with chemical mortars.
13. Detainee was arrested by Pakistani authorities in Khudzar, Pakistan, in July 2002. ♦

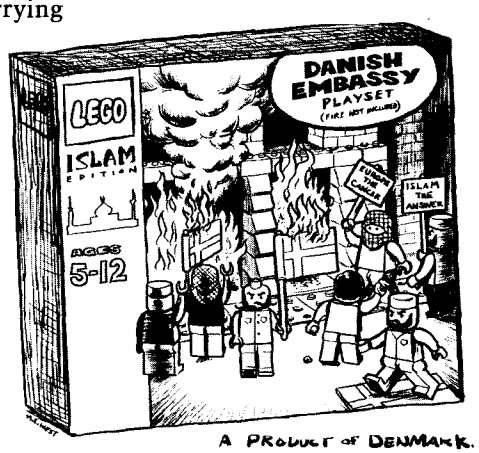
The U.N. Plays with Lego

The anti-Denmark campaign continues.

BY HENRIK BERING

Copenhagen

ARTISTS ARE OFTEN PRAISED for their ability to peer into the future. When the hysteria over the Danish Muhammad cartoons was at its height last month, another cartoon circulated on the Internet depicting a Lego "Danish embassy" playset—complete with embassy ablaze, Danish flags going up in smoke, and little Lego Islamists carrying placards that read "Europe the cancer, Islam the Answer." In linking Lego toys, a symbol of Denmark and of childhood innocence, with the campaign of hatred against Denmark sweeping through the Arab world, the cartoonist was more prescient than we knew.



Because who could have guessed that Lego would indeed find itself sucked into the controversy? In connection with its International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on March 21, the Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights issued an antiracism poster. Under the headline "Racism takes many shapes," it featured a very red and very recognizable Lego building block.

Lego and the Danish foreign ministry immediately protested, and the agency had to cancel the poster. Afterwards, a U.N. spokesman disingenuously claimed that the use of the building block had been entirely accidental, and with a smirk apologized if this had hurt Danish feelings. Unfortunately for Lego, you can't sue the United Nations.

The Lego poster incident is just one of the international humiliations heaped on Denmark, which finds itself in its greatest foreign policy crisis since World War II. The current Arab campaign against Denmark is seen as a warning to the bigger European nations. Autocratic regimes in the Middle East have a general interest in discouraging Western pressures for liberalization, while fundamentalists have a particular interest in presenting opposition to political Islam as an attack on the beliefs of ordinary Muslims.

In fact, Denmark has once before been the target of Arab wrath. In 1973, during the OPEC oil crisis, Prime Minister Anker Jørgensen cautiously suggested that Israel had a right to defend its borders. The Arab countries immediately upped their prices an extra notch especially for the Danes, who remember that as a rather cold winter. Not surprisingly, in the present crisis, the backing of Denmark's fellow E.U. members has been less than staunch.

Henrik Bering is a journalist and critic.

Illustration by Matt Westervelt

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The current anti-Danish campaign is well coordinated, and plays out on many fronts and forums. The special rapporteur for the U.N.'s Human Rights Commission, the Senegalese Doudou Diene, released his latest report on racism, discrimination, xenophobia, and intolerance in February. He devotes several pages to the Muhammad cartoons published by the *Jyllands-Posten* newspaper and portrays Denmark as a nation that is profoundly hostile toward foreigners. The fact that Diene has never set foot in Denmark and that his accusations are unsubstantiated does not strengthen the report's credibility.

The absurdity of being called out by the U.N.'s notoriously corrupt human rights establishment is heightened by the fact that Denmark has been a model supporter of the U.N., always volunteering for U.N. projects, and urging respect for international norms. Some Danes hope that this naive belief in the United Nations may be giving way to a more realistic appraisal of the nature of the organization.

The past week, the focus shifted to Bahrain, site of a major conference of 300 leading Islamic lights. Not to miss out on the fun, some of the Danish imams who started the whole anti-Danish campaign went on a fresh mission to the Middle East. On their first trip back in December, you may remember, they slipped a few incendiary cartoons of their own into the briefing folder and spread the rumor that the Koran was being burned in the streets of Copenhagen.

This time around, they were in Bahrain at the International Conference for Supporting the Prophet, ostensibly on a mission to persuade their fellow imams to end the boycott of Denmark. But their image as conciliators was badly shaken when, at the same time they were in Bahrain, a French documentary aired showing a spokesman for the traveling imams, Ahmed Akkari, on camera suggesting that the leader of Denmark's Democratic Muslims organization, a moderate member of parliament named Naser Khader, should be blown up if he enters the government.

"If he becomes Foreign or Integration Minister, we should send a couple of guys to blow up both him and the ministry," Akkari said, not knowing he was on camera. Danish police are now trying to decide whether the threats were made "in jest," as Akkari subsequently claimed. A tiny man with a scraggly beard and a high-pitched voice, Akkari had not previously been known as a great comedian.

In the same footage, Akkari's fellow imams Sheikh Raed Hlayel and Abu Bilal state that the campaign of hatred should be kept up against the *Jyllands-Posten*, which they describe as "owned and run by Jews." Incidentally, that was also the position of the conference's main speaker and most prominent figure, the learned Yusuf al-Qaradawi, whose weekly Al Jazeera program reaches an audience of 50 million. "Of course the boycott must continue. It must continue until the Danish government apologizes."

The documentary clearly demonstrates that the Danish imams have engineered the crisis to increase their own following, as part of their grand scheme to eventually impose Islamic law on Europe. The revelations of their actual agenda have led to demands in Denmark for the revocation of their residence permits.

As for the country's alleged hostility to foreigners, Mohamed Sifaoui, the respected journalist who shot the documentary for France-2, said, "We came to Denmark without preconceived ideas and found that you cannot call a country racist when it gives its minorities all rights and chooses three Muslims to parliament."

All this should ease some of the internal pressures on the center-right government of Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen. For months, the leftist opposition has been yammering about the harm done to Denmark's image abroad by the government's refusing to compromise on the issue of free speech,

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and it has been demanding a policy of never-ending self-abasement before the Middle Eastern despots.

The leftist demands have been supported by some members of the Danish business community. Arla, the Danish dairy giant that has lost its Middle Eastern export markets, took out full-page advertisements in leading Arab newspapers to issue an abject apology in connection with the Muhammad cartoons. "We understand and respect your reaction, which has led to a boycott of our products over this irresponsible and regrettable incident," the ads said. Apart from being craven and distasteful, such groveling, most analysts agree, will not work. These markets are lost for the foreseeable future.

Having himself recovered from a moment of going wobbly on the Arab television network Al Jazeera, Rasmussen, in a big interview in the daily *Berlingske Tidende*, went on the offensive, taking the media, timid Danish intellectuals, and parts of the business community to task for their fainthearted attitude towards free speech. He stated that it was time to separate the sheep from the goats, pointing out that Danish firms owe their existence and their success to the concept of free speech and that free speech is essential for democracy's survival. In the prime minister's view, no one should gratuitously insult another man's religion, but freedom of speech is a vital weapon in the fight against the Islamists.

In tone, his remarks resembled those of George W. Bush after September 11, that in the fight against terrorism, you were either with us or against us. In Denmark, as in other European nations, the Bush position was originally criticized as simplistic, but increasing numbers of Danes are beginning to realize that in the fight against Islamofascism, fence-sitting is not an option.

The nation is now steeling itself for the upcoming trial of Fadi Abdullatif, the spokesman of the extremist organization Hizb ut-Tahrir, against whom the Danish public prosecutor has finally decided to press charges for making death threats and for incitement. In November 2004, after Friday prayers at a mosque in Valby, Copenhagen, the organization distributed a flyer that said, "So go and help your brothers in Falluja, and kill your rulers if they stand in your way." And on its homepage was found the exhortation to "kill Jews, wherever you find them." Abdullatif has previously received a 60-day suspended sentence for threats against Jews.

Many Danes are now asking what took the public prosecutor so long to put Abdullatif on trial, and why he didn't move long ago to seek a ban of the organization, which in other countries is regarded as a terrorist hate group. To most ears, "Kill your rulers" and "Kill Jews" sounds pretty unambiguous. ♦

Blair's Last Stand

Britain's first and last "new Labour" prime minister. BY GERARD BAKER

TWILIGHT IS HASTENING for Tony Blair. Though British prime ministers face no term limits, few can withstand the swelling tide of public boredom and familiarity's contempt. Margaret Thatcher set a peacetime record of 11 years in office before she succumbed; Blair, elected in 1997, will have clocked up nine in May. The gathering consensus now asserts that he will not, in spite of his own ambition and energy, reach the full decade in office he had hoped for.

Last week the constitutional choreography in London seemed to hint strongly at an imminent succession. Blair's designated successor, Gordon Brown, the chancellor of the Exchequer, delivered his tenth budget speech to the House of Commons. The budget is usually a boastful recitation of economic statistics and tweaks to the tax code; the chancellor generally seizes the opportunity to tout the success of the U.K. economy and add a penny or two to the cost of a bottle of whisky.

But this time Brown presented a manifesto for the impending change in leadership. The financial details clearly bore him: Instead he waxed enthusiastic about Britain's global role and the kind of changes in the domestic political framework that are inevitable. And in the pure political theater that only the House of Commons can stage, Brown engaged in an intriguing preview of the struggle between him and David Cameron, the new Conservative party leader, that will define British politics in the run-up to the next election in 2009. Blair was reduced to the status of an amused and slightly detached onlooker.

The prime minister (for he is still that, for now) was hurt by his own campaign promise to stand down before the next election. Though he figured at the time that such a declaration might give him a full U.S.-style final term in office, he did not account for the swift and brutal motion of British politics. Blair was already weakened by the continuing and deepening unpopularity of the Iraq war. A series of domestic legislative fights in the last few months over the introduction of identity cards, toughened antiterrorist laws, and education reforms further undermined him, at least in the unforgiving eyes of his own Labour party.

But earlier this month he seemed to add the insult of venality to the

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injury of socialist apostasy. The prime minister, the public learned, was recommending several wealthy business leaders who had given generously to the Labour party for elevation to the House of Lords. This news underlined the popular view that this is a government grown remote and contemptuous of the rules of decent governance.

Republicans may fret about an approval rating for President Bush of 36 percent. But that looks positively Reaganesque compared with Blair's plight: He is now despised by two-thirds of Labour voters, three quarters of Conservatives, and a clear majority of independents.

In fact the Bush administration will have played a substantial part in Blair's demise. The Iraq war, of course, has undermined the prime minister; but the Bush administration seems oddly committed to making life even more difficult for him. Britain is in a state of angry ferment about the way its defense contracts have been handled by the Americans. A decision by the Pentagon to cut a British company out of the procurement contracts for the new Joint Strike Fighter has outraged public opinion and led even this most Atlanticist of governments to think seriously about striking out in a new direction with European partners, rather than be more closely integrated with U.S. defense systems. Quite how a beleaguered administration can still find room to alienate one of its few allies in the world is perhaps only for Donald Rumsfeld to explain. But the damage done to Blair's claim that his support for the United States has produced tangible benefits for the United Kingdom is incalculable.

Many American conservatives are tempted to regard the imminent end of Blair as a blessing. They note his statist tendencies when it comes to domestic policies—increased taxes and government spending, bans on fox hunting and other infringements of civil liberties—and wonder what side in the war of ideas he is on. And yet, just when you prepare yourself to welcome the departure of this oddly cynical and infuriatingly political man, he reminds us of just how much he will be missed when he is gone.

Last week, he gave the first of a series of three detailed speeches in defense of the Iraq war and the broader struggle against Islamist extremism. (You can read the first at *www.number10.gov.uk*; the second will be delivered in Australia this week and the third in Washington next week.) Even a British media that barely stops now to consider the case for the Iraq invasion could not ignore the power of its message. Blair spelled out, without apology, what is truly at stake in Iraq:

> People look back on the three years since the Iraq conflict; they point to the precarious nature of Iraq today and to those who have died—mainly in terrorist acts—and they say: How can it have been worth it? But there is a different question to ask: Why is it so important to the forces of reaction and violence to halt Iraq in its democratic tracks and tip it into sectarian war? Why do foreign terrorists from al Qaeda and its associates go across the border to kill and maim? Why does Syria not take stronger action to prevent them? Why does Iran meddle so furiously in the stability of Iraq?

And in explaining the bigger threat from Islamism, he demonstrated how his departure will leave a large gap where the war's most effective advocate has been for the last few years:

> Fundamentally, for this ideology, we are the enemy. . . . "We" is not the West. "We" are as much Muslim as Christian or Jew or Hindu. "We" are those who believe in religious tolerance, openness to others, to democracy, liberty, and human rights administered by secular courts. This is not a clash between civilizations. It is a clash about civilization.

In a tumultuous nine years, Blair may have gotten many small things wrong. But, as he demonstrates in these apparently valedictory remarks, when it mattered, he, perhaps better than anyone in the entire world, got the one big thing right. ♦

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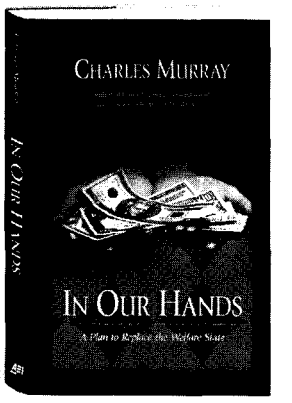

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Hobbling Hamas

Moving beyond the U.S. Policy of Three No's.

BY ROBERT SATLOFF

LAST WEEK, one of the world's deadliest terrorist organizations—the Islamic Resistance Movement, aka Hamas—announced that it has formed a cabinet and is now poised to take effective control of the Palestinian Authority, which governs Gaza and the Palestinian population of the West Bank. This comes two months after the group, responsible for killing hundreds of civilians, including 27 Americans, won a sizable plurality in Palestinian legislative elections and, with it, a crushing parliamentary majority.

Since the triumph of Hamas, the Bush administration has taken what appears to be a hard line. Washington's mantra is "no recognition, no dialogue, and no financial aid" to a Hamas-led PA until Hamas recognizes Israel, renounces violence and terror, and accepts all previous Palestinian-Israeli agreements.

But is this really such a hard-line position? The Palestinian Authority was established solely as a vehicle for the purpose of resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict diplomatically, and the only claim it has on the U.S. Treasury is its contribution to that goal. Since Hamas leaders, without exception, confirm their objective of destroying the Jewish state, the administration would be hard-pressed to find a rationale for any policy more indulgent than the one it has adopted.

Indeed, on close inspection, the Three No's of U.S. policy actually mask a passive, often confused approach. This was most evident in the odd juxtaposition of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice traveling around the Middle East urging Arab governments to deny all funding to a Hamas-led PA—and James Wolfensohn, envoy of the Quartet (created in 2002 by the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations to spur Middle East peace), visiting those very same Arab capitals urging leaders to donate as much as they could to the PA. Washington may have terminated its own direct financial support of the PA, but it did little to stop America's European allies as well as the World Bank, in whose decisions the United States has a major say, from sending tens of millions of dollars to the same address.

At the core, the problem is that the Bush administration has a policy on Hamas but no real strategy. This reflects a deep ambivalence over whether the success of Hamas at the polls in the Palestinian election of January 25 poses a threat or offers an opportunity.

On the one hand, there is widespread sympathy for the view that the empowerment of Hamas is a grave danger to U.S. interests. It is transforming the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from a difficult, bloody, but theoretically resolvable nationalist conflict into an intractable, zero-sum religious war. Before our eyes, an Islamic Republic of Palestine is taking shape next door to Israel and on the borders of Israel's two treaty partners, Jordan and Egypt. Islamist radicals of all stripes—from the mullahs in Tehran to the Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia to the jihadists of al Qaeda—are cheering the triumph of Hamas as the greatest political achievement of the new century. Now that the radicals' caliphate has a foothold at the gates of Jerusalem, all these bad actors can be expected to invest in the success of the Hamas experiment, each in its own nefarious way.

On the other hand, others in the administration hold out elections as the way to coopt Islamist political parties via the democratic process. To win power, Hamas had to accentuate a civic agenda of good, clean, responsible government; to keep power, argue the advocates of this view, Hamas will have to deliver on those promises. Along the way, Hamas will learn the hard truths that all ideological parties eventually learn. In Hamas's case, that means the price of political power is to shelve the goal of destroying Israel. While it is true that Hamas—like the Lebanese terrorist group *cum* political party Hezbollah—was permitted to win electoral legitimacy without giving up its weaponry or renouncing terrorism, circumstances will eventually compel it to do so. Such moderation, say supporters of this approach, is inevitable—or at least likely.

For President Bush, this is no arcane policy dispute. Because Hamas's victory leaves the president vulnerable on two key foreign policy themes of his administration—the fight against terror and the promotion of freedom in the Middle East—the political risks are high. After all, the president delivered a landmark speech four years ago in which he committed the United States to building a Palestinian leadership "not compromised by terror." Today, it is an obvious embarrassment that the Palestinian leadership—indeed, the PA cabinet—is made up of terrorists.

At the same time, the White House has thrown the dice on promoting elections as the first step in advancing Middle East democracy. With Islamists reaping the gains in Iraq, Lebanon, and the Palestinian territories, the policy is looking like it might be a bad bet. Unless the "freedom agenda" produces a visible success soon—defined as an Islamist party that moderates in power—the president's legacy on his signature foreign policy theme will be in serious trouble.

So far, the administration has tried to reconcile these positions by condemning Hamas as a terrorist group but praising the democratic process by

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which Palestinian voters elevated it to power. It manages this balancing act by suggesting that Palestinian voters supported Hamas not because of its commitment to destroy Israel but only as a way to throw out the corrupt incumbents of Arafat's Fatah party and, as Bill Clinton recently said, to make the Palestinian buses run on time.

The problem with this view is that it has little basis in fact. Other parties on the ballot offered alternatives to Fatah, including the good-government Third Way, but Hamas won 74 seats and the squeaky-clean liberals just 2. Indeed, it is an uncomfortable truth that an absolute majority of Palestinians voted for parties publicly committed to the destruction of Israel—Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. To suggest that Palestinians were oblivious to the political meaning of their votes is, as President Bush has argued in a different context, the soft bigotry of low expectations.

In practical terms, Washington's current policy—deny Hamas diplomatic recognition and U.S. financial aid but otherwise do little to arrest its growing hold on power—is an effort to have it both ways. In the end, it will achieve nothing. The policy does not pack enough wallop to undercut Hamas. Since Arab, Muslim, and even Western states are likely to fill in for lost U.S. aid, there is little chance that the policy will entice Hamas to come to terms with the legitimacy of Israel.

Already, the international consensus in support of the administration's three conditions has cracked. Russia was the first to break ranks, hosting a Hamas delegation in Moscow. Since then, such strategic partners as Turkey, a member of NATO, and Qatar, home to the largest U.S. air base in the Persian Gulf, have put out the welcome mat for Hamas, too.

When European powers begin to deal with Hamas, as they almost certainly will after Israel's election scheduled for March 28, the likely result of U.S. policy will be America's isolation, not the isolation of Hamas.

So Washington should get off the fence and decide what its strategic objective toward Hamas really is.

My own view is that Hamas's success poses such a threat to vital U.S. interests that we should do everything possible to abort Hamas rule. We should do this as quickly and peacefully as circumstances allow. We should work both openly and clandestinely with allies and partners who share our concern. The U.S. interest is not that Hamas slowly wither on the vine. That would require many years of containment, during which Hamas could foil our efforts by tightening its grip on power as the ayatollahs have in Iran. To the contrary, the U.S. interest is that Hamas collapse speedily and spectacularly.

Israel's role is critical. Jerusalem controls virtually the entire Palestinian economy and provides access into the Palestinian territories for all goods. Israel has the right to sever all economic ties with Gaza so as not to be responsible for sustaining Hamas rule; a case can be made that Israel is even duty-bound to prevent the emergence of a terrorist regime on territory it controls. (Israel has no role inside Gaza; in the West Bank, its troops operate relatively unfettered.) If Israel chooses to choke off a Hamas government, Washington should stand with Jerusalem.

But, critics will say, targeting the Hamas-led PA with punitive measures would punish the Palestinian people. That's right. If Hamas had come to power via a military coup, then it would be wrong to impose sanctions on the Palestinian people. But Hamas has come to power precisely because Palestinian voters chose it. If this isn't a moment when the populace itself should bear the repercussions of its actions, then what is? And isn't it more humane to level a swift blow than to inflict a thousand slow and painful cuts?

And what about democracy, the critics will say? Doesn't the Palestinian democratic process deserve our respect? The messy answer is that Washington made a mistake by acceding to an election in which Hamas could participate *without first renouncing violence and recognizing Israel*. Every democracy requires its participants to play by the rules, but we ignored the most basic rule of all: the choice of ballots over bullets. The Oslo Accords themselves had well-defined candidacy requirements for would-be legislative aspirants. But we foolishly acceded to PA president Mahmoud Abbas's decision to waive those requirements for Hamas. Admitting our mistake now is a bitter pill to swallow, but, in the long run, it will strengthen our ability to advance democracy among Palestinians and elsewhere in the Middle East.

At the moment, Palestinians pay little price for choosing a terrorist leadership. A new strategy based on vigorous efforts to stop international financial transactions and block all but narrowly defined humanitarian assistance would tell them that their actions have consequences. In the near term, this might conceivably propel into the streets the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who did not vote for a radical Islamist government, perhaps even triggering the collapse of the Hamas regime.

Many of these voters, though, were themselves Yasser Arafat's fellow-travelers, companions in the two-faced game the chairman played as terrorist-peacemaker. In the longer run, therefore, the United States needs to revert to the principles enunciated in President Bush's farsighted but apparently forgotten June 2002 address: "A Palestinian state will never be created by terror—it will be built through reform." This will require a multiyear investment in building a truly liberal democracy in the West Bank and Gaza, one whose claim to sovereignty is worthy of our support.

Aborting Hamas rule will not be easy. With a war to fight in Iraq and no good answers on Iran, the administration may opt not to face up to its mistake and instead put the Palestinian issue in the "too hard to do" file. But whatever we decide, we should not delude ourselves that our current policy will solve the Hamas problem. On the contrary, it is likely to deepen our own. ♦

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The Gospel According to Lowell

Weicker ponders a grudge match against Joe Lieberman. BY FRED LUCAS

LOWELL WEICKER put his cane aside and thrust his heavy 6'6" frame up the stairs. Now 74, the former senator had a knee replacement last year, but as he stepped up to the pulpit at the First Congregational Church of Old Lyme, Connecticut, one Sunday afternoon in late January, he seemed anything but feeble.

"We are all about to lose a country—ours, not Iraq," he bellowed, with the passion of a man half his age. "The greatest casualty of this war is the image we have of ourselves and the reality of what we have become. How did matters get to this point? How have we moved from Norman Rockwell's America to a United States where violence, torture, mendaciousness, spying, propaganda, and disregard for the law have become the new patriotism?"

In the last seven years, Weicker has been closer to pro wrestling than to politics, as a board member of the Stamford-based World Wrestling Entertainment. But it's looking more and more like he'll be taking on an old rival for a grudge match 18 years in the making: a third-party challenge to Senator Joe Lieberman, the Democrat who ended Weicker's third term in the Senate in 1988, defeating him by just 10,000 votes.

A lot has changed since 1988. Weicker served one term as Connecticut's governor, then seemed to retire from politics in 1994. Lieberman, meanwhile, went from being Democratic vice presidential nominee in 2000 to Democratic pariah, scorned by the left wing of the party for his dogged support of the Iraq war.

This year, many angry liberals want to rally behind an antiwar candidate who will criticize the president, not a Democrat who has been mentioned for cabinet positions in the Bush administration.

For now, though, Weicker is playing the reluctant warrior.

"I have no desire to get back in the political ring," he told the crowd of 150 people at the First Congregational Church's antiwar forum, where he was the keynote speaker. "But it's the only thing I know how to do in terms of confronting this issue. One thing I do know, I am not going to give anyone in Connecticut in public office a free pass on this issue."

In Connecticut, 42 percent of voters are unaffiliated, the largest bloc, which could help Weicker as a third-party candidate.

In an interview for this article, Weicker threw down the gauntlet: He'll stay out of the race only if "we are out of Iraq, if Joe Lieberman no longer agrees with the president, if an antiwar Republican runs, or if a viable Democrat can challenge Lieberman in the Democratic primary."

Subsequently, Greenwich businessman Ned Lamont started a self-financed campaign against Lieberman for the Democratic nomination, using the war as a key issue. But Weicker said this won't get him "off the hook" unless the unknown Lamont appears likely to win the state's August 8 primary.

Weicker-Lieberman II would have enough political novelty to make it one of the most closely watched contests in the nation: a rematch between two giants in national politics, and a referendum on the Iraq war. Weicker said his decision will come in mid to late spring.

In Connecticut, 42 percent of voters are registered as unaffiliated, the largest bloc, which could help Weicker as a third-party candidate. Meanwhile, according to a Quinnipiac University poll, 51 percent of Connecticut voters overall and 74 percent of Democrats disagree with Lieberman on the Iraq war.

Weicker has a history of defying political odds. He was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1970 after just one term in the House. And after breaking with the Republican party, he won the governor's office as an independent in 1990.

But Weicker's foremost claim to fame is that, as a freshman Republican senator on the Watergate committee, he took a chance by hounding the Nixon administration well before other Republicans followed suit.

"Instead of his political doom, it made him," says Barry Sussman, a former editor at the *Washington Post* and the coauthor of Weicker's memoir, *Maverick: A Life in Politics*.

"I would never underestimate Lowell Weicker once he seizes on an issue he cares about," Sussman said. "The least that can be said is that he is putting a very important issue before the voters of Connecticut."

But Weicker must also deal with the legacy of the income tax he signed into law as governor, making Connecticut one of the most heavily taxed states in the nation—certainly a political liability.

Politicos still talk about the highly effective "sleeping bear" campaign ad in 1988 that mocked Weicker's girth and listed the number of Senate votes he had missed.

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The underdog Lieberman painted Weicker as out of touch with the state and won a tight race with some support from Republicans tired of the liberal senator.

Today, Lieberman would win 65 percent of the vote against Weicker in a one-on-one race, according to the Quinnipiac poll. But a Rasmussen Reports poll late last year was less encouraging: Lieberman won just 54 percent to Weicker's 32 percent.

"If you look at Lieberman's totals, and take out Republican support, Lieberman has under 40 percent," said Scott Rasmussen, president of Rasmussen Reports. "A race between a Republican, Lieberman, and Weicker could have all three candidates in the 30s." So far, only one Republican has declared, Paul Streitz, an anti-immigration candidate who has never been elected to office.

Lieberman actually has a higher approval rating among the state's Republicans (68 percent) than Democrats (55 percent), according to the Quinnipiac poll. So a three-way race might be great for Weicker.

But Weicker detests polls. "I don't care if the polls are 90 percent to 10 percent against me," he says. "That wouldn't change anything."

As he preached the gospel according to Lowell from the pulpit that Sunday in Old Lyme, he certainly appeared to be in the game.

"The time has come to challenge incumbents," he told the gathering. "I first came into political prominence in 1968. I challenged a pro-war Johnson Democrat for the fourth congressional seat of Connecticut. He was for the war. I was against the war. Both of us knew we would rise or fall on that issue."

If liberals truly see everything through the prism of Vietnam, Weicker may be expecting to achieve his own resurgence in 2006 by challenging a pro-war Bush Democrat. If he succeeds, it will only render victory the sweeter that, along with recapturing his glory days, he'll have the last laugh against Joe Lieberman. ♦

The Status Quo Riots

It's springtime in Paris—bring out the barricades.

BY JOSEPH FITCHETT

THE CURRENT WAVE of protests in France is regularly misportrayed as a pale remake of the 1968 student revolt that brought down Charles de Gaulle. The comparison gets it awfully wrong.

True, we are witnessing a ritualistic springtime skirmish between students and the authorities. But there is an ironic ideological twist: It is the French government that is advocating change while students on the moral barricades are defending the status quo.

As the conflict gathers steam, it offers a historically recognizable ballet—the government confronting student and trade-union demonstrators. This political trope enjoys special legitimacy in France, where factions and interest groups marginalized in government and parliament take their issues to the streets by strike methods and sometimes even violence that would not be tolerated in the United States or other European democracies.

The interesting point about the current French situation—and the reason it may matter—is that gusto for confrontation is coming not from the students but from Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin. He has embraced the prospect of a showdown.

Normally, he would have been expected to shun conflict. Villepin, appointed last summer, is running for president and trying to jaw-jaw his way to popularity with piecemeal reforms that don't offend the left—reforms-by-stealth. So, logically, he should be trying to accommodate the students and avoid an embarrassing stalemate and possible defeat.

Instead, as of this writing, he is steadfastly refusing to dangle a face-saving compromise or stake out a line of retreat—a stance that is tantamount to escalation.

In the past, Villepin has often tripped over his own bravado. But something more is at work this time, perhaps even a new political dynamic in France. In his enthusiasm for a showdown with the protesters, Villepin clearly thinks he can find an unexpected foothold in his ascent to real power. He seems to be inviting a fall. But, if he succeeds, he may plant a crampon offering fresh leverage on the protracted struggle in France over how (and indeed whether) to modernize the nation's "social model"—meaning essentially how much protection French workers can expect against the pressures of competitive globalization.

Rash as it may seem, Villepin's gamble stems from an insight into the nature of the forces arrayed in systematic opposition to reformist change in France. Their key feature is their fragmented, diffuse, and fluid character as interest groups that are normally dispersed like tinder ready to be kindled when an issue strikes a match. Their own agendas are narrow—opposition to genetically modified crops, to changes in France's tax on personal wealth (a levy that costs more to administer than it brings in), to affirmative action for Muslim immigrants (decried in the name of French equality, with its mantra of one-size-fits-all), or to flexibility in labor regulations. When one of these interests is

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challenged, all these factions usually rally to the cause.

The fragmented nature of these factions makes them unable to offer leadership of their own, but enables them to survive as the fodder for massive shows of opposition to change, including action in the street.

To show that the country can be governed, a sensible agenda is not enough in the current circumstances. The strategic imperative, in Villepin's approach, is to flush out the dispersed stand-pat factions from their narrow agendas and get them to deploy for a frontal confrontation in which their reputation for invulnerability can be shattered.

A suitable flash point came with the new labor law. Hastily drafted last fall in response to a bout of youth unrest and arson in immigrant-populated suburbs, the law will probably have to be amended in the light of experience with employers once it goes into effect. Imperfect or not, the controversial law worked as a rallying point for the inchoate opposition in France. Now Villepin is using his initiative as a bayonet: Push until you meet resistance, then push harder because you know you have reached a point where it counts. If the opposition staggers, Villepin will have changed expectations and devalued the trump of an appeal to the street.

It's a risky strategy, especially in the hands of Villepin and President Jacques Chirac, the duo who precipitated a politically disastrous confrontation with the French trade unions in 1995 by inciting Prime Minister Alain Juppé to go head-to-head with the deeply entrenched unions at state-owned French Railways and at Electricity of France, the giant state-owned utility. The ensuing conflict lasted two months, in which general strikes brought the country to a standstill right up to the Christmas holidays. Nominally about pensions and health care, the conflict was a struggle for control of the nation's political direction comparable to Margaret Thatcher's confrontation with British miners 15 years earlier.

In Britain, the Iron Lady famously won. But Juppé was proposing changes greater than the French were ready to swallow, and he folded. In an equally colossal misreading of the French public mood, the floundering government eventually called a snap election and lost. Both fiascos were the work of Chirac, the recently elected president, and Villepin, his top aide. Undeterred, the duo in 2003 positioned France against the United States on the Iraq invasion (Villepin had become foreign minister). The same buddies, reeling onwards like Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, masterminded the failed campaign to ratify the E.U. constitution. They chose a referendum (instead of the parliament they control) to ratify the largely made-in-France initiative. The electorate rejected the constitution a year ago in a vote that dramatically repudiated all the mainstream French political parties.

That setback vaulted Villepin to the premiership of a country politically adrift. The referendum debacle revealed the hemorrhaging credibility of the French political establishment and the emergent power of a largely inchoate "culture of opposition" in France. The leaderless situation spoke for itself last fall in the eruption of anarchic violence in immigrant-populated suburbs that continued for weeks while Villepin and Chirac wobbled and waffled.

But the present squabble has stiffened them into a high-postured offensive stance. The issue itself seems modest enough in contemporary economic practice. The "First Employment Contract" put through parliament by the Villepin government would give employers the right to fire workers easily and freely when they are under 26 and have been in a job for less than two years. The idea is simple: Companies are reluctant to hire young people with no work record because it is too hard and costly to fire them if business shrinks or a new employee does not work out.

The pragmatic problem is real enough. Youth employment has become acute in France: Joblessness among 18- to 25-year-olds runs twice as high as it does in the rest of the working-age population and much higher than in similar age groups in the United States or Britain. The government claims that the change, breaking with the recent French mantra of equal protection for all working people, will bring job opportunities—and admittedly short-term risks—to many more French young people, especially job candidates who are not outstandingly well qualified and likely to convince employers to invest in them, such as young Muslim men in the ghetto-like suburbs.

Opponents of the new law depict it as the thin end of a wedge capable of prying away job security. The government counters that the critics simply want to prolong a system constricting job growth. In practice, the current stagnation amounts to protecting the unemployment benefits of people who will never get a job in their lives.

In seizing the occasion, Villepin hopes to demonstrate—for the first time in decades in France—that a government can push through an agenda for change against the implicit threat of a massive reaction in the streets.

The blackmail factor of street politics in France is not just a left-right issue. Socialist president François Mitterrand never recovered the political momentum of the French left after he succumbed to a massive conservative demonstration when he proposed taking government subsidies from parochial Catholic schools.

But it has been a special sensitivity for French conservatives since the collapse of the postwar Gaullist consensus in 1968. Since then, rightist French leaders—not sufficiently confident of their own legitimacy to risk a violent veto from the street—have rarely faced down a popular revolt from the left. Even rightist lobbies such as farmers or truckers have been allowed to hijack the political process with strong-arm tactics, apparently because conservative governments

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PHOTOPQR / Le Parisien / Gael Cornier

Demonstrators at the Panthéon, March 23

feared that a prolonged disturbance might play into "revolutionary" hands.

This implicit threat of "the street" has spawned a pervasive culture of paralysis. A mindset of defensive calculations exists in French society, including the mainstream political parties and the business community, which now calculates that attempts to introduce radical changes are doomed and therefore not worth fighting for.

If Villepin faces down the street, he can start making the most fundamental change of all in French attitudes—to a sense that change is possible and therefore a possible good. But after so many failures, what makes Villepin think he can succeed?

For one thing, he has no choice. Presidential elections are due in a year's time, and his only chance lies in demonstrating that he has a winning formula for conservative leadership. The fragmentation of French politics puts a premium on shoring up support in his own rank and file, devaluing the old formulas of broad coalitions.

Beyond his presidential ambitions, some social changes have improved Villepin's chances of succeeding with his confrontational strategy. Crucially, trade unions' strength has fallen drastically. Already near zero in private-sector industry and business, their membership and political clout are dwindling with the shrinkage of France's state-owned sector. More broadly, the lack of effective grass-roots organizations (including mosques as well as unions) is a key factor in the social anomie in France's largely immigrant zones.

Villepin's strategy could never have coalesced without the catalyzing role of his conservative rival for the presidency, Interior Minister Nicholas Sarkozy. It is Sarkozy who lectured the French, in word and deed, on the need for plain talk about labor-law liberalization, education reforms, candor about race and ethnicity, checks on welfare abuse, reform of the court system, performance incentives in the civil service bureaucracies—almost all the sensitive subjects that have been taboo in party political discourse in France.

Thanks to the educational shock-treatment from the blunt Sarkozy, much of French opinion—this is another recent change in the political landscape—may be ready to acquiesce in Villepin's newly aggressive tactics. Until this act reaches its denouement, Sarkozy is overshadowed on the political stage. His presidential ambitions burn as hot as Villepin's, but he has no option but to back Villepin to the hilt. To do otherwise would expose Sarkozy to damaging charges that he betrayed his side and his own values in the crunch.

Villepin, who often invokes Napoleon as the historic model for success in leading the French into collective action, is applying his mentor's belief that a decisive small engagement can transform the battleground and alter the war. He is taking a make-or-break gamble, risking long obscurity if he fails. If he succeeds, he may just deliver a salutary jolt to France's largely paralyzed political system. ♦

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My Dinner with Jack

The Jamboree in Jamba, the making of 'Red Scorpion,' and other tales of the Abramoff era

By Mark Hemingway

Jack Abramoff needs my help. Facing a March 29 sentencing deadline for fraud, tax evasion, and conspiring to bribe public officials, the disgraced lobbyist sent out a blast email, which says, "My attorneys have advised me to seek help from friends in the form of letters to the judge on my behalf." Abramoff says this will help counteract the "harsh media caricature" of him—he claims 2,100 negative articles have been written about him—and will encourage lenience from the judge presiding over his trial.

Jack probably doesn't remember me, but I met him three years ago. I'll try my best to help salvage his reputation, but even he must realize that's not an easy thing to do. Take this classic remark from Ed Rogers. The GOP lobbyist appeared on *Hardball* in January to defend his profession and downplay Abramoff's misdeeds, almost forgetting that one of Jack's business partners is connected to a mob hit down in the Sunshine State:

> Look, this is going to come out. Nobody is going to keep it a secret. Jack Abramoff is so radioactive—I've got Jack Abramoff fatigue already. I mean, good grief, he didn't kill anybody. *Maybe that one guy in Florida*. [emphasis added]

Oops. Of course, thus far Abramoff doesn't appear to be directly linked to the murder, even if he's certainly guilty of being so drunk with greed that he wasn't at all discriminating about who he did business with. Unfortunately, the one image the public holds of Abramoff is the infamous photo of him leaving the federal courthouse—a shifty-eyed crook clad in trench coat and black hat, bridging the sartorial divide between Al Capone and Boss Tweed. But calling a smooth political operator such as Abramoff a gangster is just too easy.

Unlike the hordes of politicians rushing to disavow their relationship with him, I have no problem saying I knew Abramoff. For three glorious hours, I was his captive private audience at his now-defunct restaurant, Signatures. And I can tell you, he is handsome, hugely entertaining, and even self-deprecating at times. I'd wager Abramoff's success was largely the result of his charm (though as Saul Bellow warned, charm is always a bit of a racket). He's likable and inspires those around him, and given that, most everyone in Washington who denies their association with him was probably a willing accomplice.

I know because I was almost one of them.

Three years ago I received a totally unexpected phone call.

"Hemingway! You have a clean suit?"

I was a little embarrassed, really. I barely knew "Frank"—as we'll call him—and he'd already sized me up as one of a few dozen professionals in town that would have to think before answering that question. Frank was a "Republican media strategist"—one of those unique Washington creatures who draw a paycheck out of the ether without anyone having a clear idea of what they actually do.

Such people usually make me wary, but I liked the guy, and given my asymptotic career trajectory I was happy to take his call. I was even happier to find out he was offering me work. I just had to print out a résumé and clips and be at some restaurant on Pennsylvania Avenue later that night to meet with Jack Abramoff.

I had no idea who he was, much to Frank's incredulity. Abramoff wasn't just a lobbyist. He was The Lobbyist. He was rich. Really rich. Frank wasn't sure, but he thought he might be worth $100 million or so. In retrospect I think it says a great deal about Washington that I did not immediately wonder how a lobbyist could become that wealthy. Instead, I went home and ironed a shirt.

When I arrived at Signatures, Frank was already there.

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It was a weeknight, and the restaurant was almost empty. Frank and I exchanged pleasantries, but he was most concerned with making me understand how big a deal this meeting was. That made me feel slightly nervous, worried that some ill-timed wisecrack on my part would deflate Abramoff's ego, and I'd never work in this town again.

When Abramoff finally did arrive, every employee in the place snapped to attention. He couldn't have better embodied any notions I had about what fat-cat lobbyists look like. He was immaculately groomed and wearing a shiny suit worth about twice my monthly salary. The outfit seemed calculated to project an image of power rather than style. What was impressive was the way he *filled out* his suit. Abramoff has gained 50 pounds or so since then, no doubt from the stress of his legal difficulties. It was a slimmer Abramoff I met that evening, but it was obvious he had been something of a weightlifter when he was younger. Beverly Hills-bred fat cat or not, he had the strong presence of someone you can count on in a bar fight. That is truly an oddity in Washington, where weaselly countenances are as common as calluses and scars are rare.

As he shook my hand and sat down, the tension dissipated. He started talking and was friendly and interested in me. The staff was understandably attentive, but he hardly bossed anyone around. As relaxed as he seemed, though, it was his joint and he knew it. Frank and I ordered off the menu, while Abramoff waited until the sushi chef came to the table. The chef stood to the side and offered up his recommendations, explaining the varying degrees of freshness of the available fish. Jack listened intently while the chef awkwardly tried to avoid too much eye contact with the boss man. He warmly accepted the sushi chef's suggestion, and as the food arrived, we got down to business.

"Have you ever seen the movie *Red Scorpion*?" Now a lot of people might have stared blankly when Abramoff asked that question, but I had actually seen the movie one bleary night in high school. I think TBS aired it as a chaser to its 10,000th showing of *The Beastmaster*. It was a bottom of the barrel *Rambo* rip-off, mildly redeemed by its novel conceit:

Dolph Lundgren—a six-foot-five Swedish B-movie action star, best known for his role as the evil Ivan Drago in *Rocky IV*—plays an elite Soviet *Spetsnaz* officer named Nikolai. Nikolai is sent on a mission by his superiors to infiltrate rebel forces opposing the Soviet occupation of a fictional African country, clearly modeled after Angola.

After his infiltration attempt is thwarted by the African rebel leader (a character based on Jonas Savimbi, the anti-Communist *cause célèbre* who spent much of the '70s and '80s fighting the Soviet-backed Angolan government), Nikolai is brutally tortured by his Soviet superiors for his failure. He escapes to the desert, where he nearly dies, before being nursed back to health by an African bushman who teaches him how to survive in the unforgiving landscape. His eyes are eventually opened to the Soviets' heartless slaughter of whole African villages, and he joins the rebels to destroy the Soviet base of command and drive them out of the country.

The movie is mostly a series of mindless explosions, but it does contain this classic exchange after Lundgren indiscriminately shoots up a bar: "Are you out of your f—ing mind?" "No, just out of bullets." *Red Scorpion* has all the standard '80s action film trappings, and it hardly occurred to me when I first saw it that the film was really an anti-Communist tract masquerading as a shoot-'em-up.

So when Abramoff told me he was the writer and producer of *Red Scorpion*, I almost laughed at the absurdity of it all. What's more, he wanted to write a book about the making of *Red Scorpion* and was looking for a ghost-writer. I almost laughed again. Abramoff was piling vanity on top of absurdity. A book about a forgotten action flick? Surely he was joking. I reached for my tape recorder, but it was politely refused, so I hope Jack will forgive me if I don't get the details precisely right or do the story the justice it so richly deserves.

One of Abramoff's redeeming qualities is that he was an unrepentant Cold Warrior. His story that night began when he was a young activist obsessed with ending communism. According to another unrepentant Cold Warrior, former Reagan speechwriter Dana Rohrabacher, who now represents Orange County in Congress, Abramoff back in those days was "a young idealist with so much energy that it just bubbled over. He was irrepressible during the Cold War and in trying to end the threat of communism."

In the summer of 1985 Abramoff helped plan and organize an event that, as Abramoff told me, inspired *Red Scorpion*. Abramoff joined forces with Jack Wheeler, another anti-Communist activist, to create the "Jamboree in Jamba"—known more formally as the Democratic International. The pair approached Lewis Lehrman, a conservative benefactor who made a fortune off his Rite-Aid drugstores, with the idea: For years the Soviets had been sponsoring what amounted to supervillain summits, where Sandinistas, African Communist insurgents, and representatives of the PLO and Cuba convened presumably to stroke their fluffy white cats and update their arms-dealer Rolodexes.

Abramoff convinced Lehrman that this put the "good guys" at a comparative disadvantage—the Nicaraguan contras, the Afghan mujahedeen, Savimbi's rebels in Angola,

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and other freedom fighters needed a meeting of their own. Congress was in the process of cutting off aid to the contras, and anything that could be done to bolster the group's public reputation would be politically helpful to Reagan. Lehrman agreed to fund it, and Rohrabacher was brought in to help muster support from inside the White House. Abramoff and Wheeler would handle the details on the ground.

According to Abramoff, the event was a goat rodeo from the start. Hardly a government in the world was enamored of the idea, and simply deciding where to hold the event was no small affair. Only two governments were publicly supportive: South Africa and Israel, and for PR reasons it was quickly decided that neither country was a suitable venue.

So they settled on Jamba, Angola, the home base of Savimbi's UNITA movement (National Union of Total Independence for Angola), which was fighting the Cuban troops that propped up the Soviet-backed Angolan government. Not exactly the most hospitable locale.

Logistically, the event was a nightmare. Simply trying to get the attendees into the Angolan hinterland provoked international incidents. Pakistan blocked some Afghan rebels from leaving, and skittish Thai officials almost stopped Laotian anti-Communist leader Pa Kao Her from departing Bangkok.

Facilities consisted of little more than grass huts and an airstrip, and managing the various cultures and egos proved challenging, as demonstrated by Abramoff's deft and hilarious impersonation of a frenzied Afghan warlord who insisted on ranting and raving for 45 minutes, long after the translator who had been procured on his behalf proved worthless. Not only was Abramoff's mimicry compelling, he gestured wildly with his hands in a way that caught me totally off guard, making me laugh harder. He clearly wasn't afraid to embarrass himself, a quality that was endearing, considering I had started out the evening somewhat intimidated. I also became aware of how carefully he was gauging my reaction to his tale. He didn't care about impressing me; it was obvious he had little to prove. But he did tell his story in a generous way—he wanted me to enjoy it, and I did.

The final insult in Jamba was running out of food. Abramoff, who keeps kosher, had packed all his own provisions into the African jungle. Upon leaving the event early, he stood on the stairs of the plane auctioning off his remaining cans of tuna for as much as $20 to ravenous members of the press who had yet to leave.

The jamboree itself ended up being largely ceremonial. Everyone pledged to share intelligence, and Lehrman read a letter Rohrabacher had drafted on Reagan's behalf, expressing solidarity with those struggling against the Soviet empire. The *Time* reporter on the scene concluded that the meeting marked the beginning of "a new lobby to urge Congress to support the Nicaraguan contras and other anti-Communist guerrillas." Considering the improbability of the thing coming together at all, everyone involved considered it a success.

But for Abramoff, the pivotal moment in Jamba came when he was approached by someone trying to secure funding for a documentary about Savimbi. Abramoff scoffed. *Rambo: First Blood Part II* had just been released in theaters three weeks earlier, becoming the first film to open on more than 2,000 screens. "Why would you want to make a documentary? Nobody watches documentaries," he told me. "I said to the guy, 'You should make an action film.'"

You can also say this for Abramoff—the man has a gift for making wild ideas a reality. Jack revisited his movie idea in an entertainment law class he took while finishing his degree at Georgetown a few years later. He sketched out a story based loosely on what he knew about Savimbi's plight and the Soviet operations in that part of Africa.

After graduating, Jack moved home to Beverly Hills and enlisted his brother in the movie project. Things started falling into place. With Lundgren attached to star, they secured a few million in funding. They scouted locations in Africa, figuring they could film cheaply over there, eventually settling on Swaziland. What Jack didn't tell me was that he had strong ties to South Africa's apartheid government at the time, and was counting on using tanks and helicopters from their defense forces in crucial battle scenes.

As in Jamba, Abramoff's plan got off to a rocky start. Shortly after he'd dumped hundreds of thousands of dollars into sets and pre-production in Swaziland, the once cooperative and enthusiastic government suddenly decided to kick them out of the country.

According to Jack, this was because someone in the government was told that a Western camera crew had been involved in a coup attempt in another African country some years earlier, and they balked at allowing the film to continue. I'd also conjecture that a plan to invite South African tanks and helicopters into the country, even as props, might have made them a wee bit nervous.

Abramoff made a last-ditch attempt to keep the film from being ejected from Swaziland, a move that would cause the investors he had lined up to pull out. He had a series of absurd encounters with different government ministers that were straight out of an Evelyn Waugh novel. Each kept referring him to a different minister they said was responsible for the matter, and yet somehow each minister was physically related to the previous one.

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Again, he told this tale employing dead-on impersonation, nailing the heavily accented patois of the African bureaucrats. Considering how Abramoff put himself at the center of every story that evening, he struck me at the time as being very self-aware—not exactly something he has subsequently been well known for. He told the story with an understanding of the futility of attempting to get anything done in corrupt African ministries. Of course, that only made it more amusing. He understood that the Swaziland officials' "What, me worry?" attitude was likely a more rational response at the time than the young Jack Abramoff's desperation to protect his investment. And he didn't mind your laughing at him because of it.

His attempts to pacify the government of Swaziland were to no avail. They were kicked out, and the film's investors pulled out. So Abramoff threw a Hail Mary, and it worked.

The film was still being written, and there wasn't so much as a script to show potential backers. They didn't even have a title. (Jack and his brother—being first and foremost politicos—would commission a poll; *Red Scorpion* emerged as the winner.) They had one ace in the hole, though. Dolph Lundgren was still attached to star and, as improbable as it sounds today, was still a bankable name in the action-film heyday of the 1980s. So Abramoff mocked up a poster of *Red Scorpion* with Lundgren's picture on it and took off for the Venice film festival. In an impressive feat of salesmanship, he returned to Africa with $16 million in funding from various distributors.

They were now filming in Namibia, but things hadn't gotten any easier. They had star trouble. Lundgren was wildly erratic on the set. Abramoff and the other producers felt physically intimidated by the onetime karate champ. Lundgren spent his downtime carousing up a storm in Johannesburg, and he did not want his girlfriend back home to find out. It became the producers' responsibility to keep him out of the South African tabloids. (For bonus points, Abramoff casually let it drop that the girl back home whose delicate sensibilities Lundgren sought to protect was none other than Paula Barbieri, the Playboy Playmate who moved on to dating O.J. Simpson, only to break up with him the day Nicole Brown was murdered.)

Then there was the problem of the film's other star—the authentic African bushman they had cast in a pivotal role. In Jack's opinion, he's the best actor in the film. Most people who've seen the film agree. Regopstaan, the very spry 95-year-old bushman, agreed to do the film only if his entourage, er, *tribe* was allowed to follow him around. Then there was the small matter of payment. Regopstaan's terms included the condition that the producers find him a wife. By this point in my evening with Abramoff, I was expending all my energy keeping my jaw off the floor, so I never did hear how that particular problem was solved. But I trust Jack found a way.

Red Scorpion was finally released in 1989, the same year the Cubans withdrew their last soldiers from Angola and the Soviet Union collapsed. It made $40 million on its $16 million investment. In one fell swoop, Jack had done his part to win the Cold War and made himself a millionaire. Nobody would call Jack a visionary artist, but he didn't care. He took his money and moved back to Washington to become a lobbyist shortly afterward.

By the end of the evening, I was trying to maintain my composure while I did everything short of shoving my résumé down Abramoff's throat. I wanted to write this book. It would be a pleasure to write, and it was obvious Abramoff could pay me handsomely for it. But more than that, I wanted to work with him. For a guy whose two most visible writing credits are a B-movie screenplay and a series of subpoenaed emails (e.g., "lets get some more $ from those monkeys!!!"), the man could tell a story like few people I have encountered. Of course, I have no way of knowing how much of what I heard that night was exaggerated. But I never got the sense that anything Abramoff told me that evening was strictly for the purpose of self-aggrandizement. Little did I know that Abramoff's legend was already secure, and it would have nothing to do with the incredible story he told me that evening.

Alas, I was dispatched with a handshake and a nod while Frank and Jack stuck around to talk more business. I called Frank repeatedly over the next couple of weeks and was told Jack had decided he was just too busy to write the book. What seemed like the story of a lifetime to me was business as usual for Jack.

From that point on in my nascent career, I viewed the encounter with Abramoff as The One That Got Away. Unlike a lot of his clients, I count myself richer for the experience of having met him. I learned more about how Washington works in a single evening with him than some people pick up in a lifetime. Of course, friends have suggested that I was lucky not to get tangled up with Abramoff, but to them I say he's going to have a lot of time on his hands in prison, and I hope he still has my résumé.

So if Jack is going to petition the press for more positive media portrayals, let me throw in my two cents. And if the judge presiding over his trial reads this, let me say on his behalf that Jack Abramoff is highly charismatic and I doubt any of his crimes were committed by unfairly twisting the arms of others. And for what it's worth, he's a gracious host and excellent storyteller. Anyone would feel lucky to sit down and have dinner with him.

Well, except maybe that one guy in Florida. ♦

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Getty / Hulton

Lincoln in Richmond, April 3, 1865

Firmness in the Right

How, and why, Lincoln ended slavery By Michael Burlingame

In this estimable volume, Richard Striner effectively demolishes the fashionable myths of Lincoln the Reluctant Emancipator and Lincoln the White Supremacist. Deeply committed to the antislavery cause, the sixteenth president was, as Striner persuasively argues, "a fervent idealist" and "an artist in the Machiavellian uses of power."

Lincoln loathed and despised slavery early on. "I have always hated slavery I think as much as any abolitionist," he declared during his unsuccessful quest for a Senate seat in 1858. Six years later, as he prepared his bid for a second term in the White House, he wrote a public letter avowing "I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I can not remember when I did not so think, and feel."

But Lincoln also revered the Constitution and felt bound to abide by it, even the odious fugitive slave clause. To his best friend, Kentucky slaveholder Joshua Speed, he confided in 1855: "I . . . acknowledge *your* rights and *my* obligations, under the constitution, in regard to your slaves. I confess I hate to see the poor creatures hunted down, and caught, and carried back to their stripes, and unrewarded toils; but I bite my lip and keep quiet." That sight was "a continual torment to me; and I see something like it every time I touch the Ohio, or any other slave-border. It is hardly fair for you to assume, that I have no interest in a thing which has, and continually exercises, the power of making me miserable. You ought rather to appreciate how much the great body of the Northern people do crucify their feelings, in order to maintain their loyalty to the constitution and the Union."

Father Abraham
Lincoln's Relentless Struggle to End Slavery
by Richard Striner
Oxford. 320 pp., $28

As president, Lincoln would have issued the Emancipation Proclamation much earlier than he did if he had acted on his own wishes. But he felt bound by his oath of office to uphold the Constitution, which meant preserving the Union. If he moved prematurely, he rightly feared driving some or all of the loyal slave states (Kentucky, Missouri, Maryland, and Delaware) into the arms of the Confederacy, and thus losing the war. Only when those states were securely cemented to the Union did he announce the emancipation policy. Critics who accuse Lincoln of being soft on slavery denounce the pragmatic justification of military necessity he gave for taking that step. But as he cogently explained, the only constitu-

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tional ground for ordering emancipation was his authority under the war power. Because emancipation was legitimate as a measure for undermining the Confederacy, he restricted the scope of the proclamation to those areas still in rebellion. Exempt were the Border States and parts of the Confederacy occupied by Union forces. Greasing the skids for the proclamation, Lincoln wrote a public letter a month before its issuance that, as Striner emphasizes, has been widely misunderstood:

> My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that. What I do about slavery, and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union. . . . I have here stated my purpose according to my view of official duty; and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men every where could be free.

This letter was not a definitive statement of Lincoln's innermost feelings about the aims of the war but, rather, a political utterance designed to smooth the way for the proclamation, which he had already written and intended to promulgate as soon as the Union army won a major victory. He knew full well that millions of northerners and border state residents would object to transforming the war into an abolitionist crusade. They were willing to fight to preserve the Union but not to free the slaves. As president, Lincoln had to make the mighty act of emancipation palatable to them. By assuring conservatives that emancipation was simply a means to preserve the Union, Lincoln hoped to minimize the white backlash that he knew would come.

Lincoln feared that his proclamation might not stand up in court. Striner shows that the president worked assiduously behind the scenes to reconstruct Confederate states during the war as Union forces penetrated ever deeper southward. His Ten Percent plan, which enabled a state to resume good standing in the Union if one-tenth of its eligible electorate took a loyalty oath, represented no abandonment of blacks, as critics charged. Lincoln wanted white southerners in the reconstructed states to abolish slavery through their legislatures, which the Constitution did not forbid. Moreover, he knew that white backlash would be diminished if emancipation were decreed by their own state governments rather than by the federal government.

When that strategy fizzled, Lincoln vigorously supported a measure guaranteeing freedom to all slaves that no court could undo: a constitutional amendment. Using his powers of persuasion, he cajoled Congress to pass the Thirteenth Amendment, which finally did abolish slavery throughout the nation.

Once slavery was abolished, Lincoln wanted the liberated blacks to enjoy real freedom. To that end he signed legislation establishing a Freedmen's Bureau, which Striner rightly characterizes as "an unprecedented social welfare agency." In addition, the president publicly endorsed limited black suffrage in an important speech two days after Robert E. Lee surrendered. His recommendation applied to tens of thousands of black veterans of the Union army as well as "very intelligent" black men.

That speech cost Lincoln his life, for John Wilkes Booth was in the audience and declared to companions who would help him assassinate the president three days later, "That means nigger citizenship. Now, by God, I'll put him through. That is the last speech he will ever make." And so it was. Thus, Lincoln was a martyr to black civil rights as much as Martin Luther King and Medgar Evers.

Striner's treatment of Lincoln's prepresidential years focuses on the period 1854-61. In dealing with the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858, Striner notes that it "is easy enough to view Lincoln in a very bad light by our contemporary standards." But he correctly points out that Lincoln's statements that grate most harshly on modern ears (opposing black citizenship rights) were "a defense against the crude demagoguery of Douglas." Douglas, like many of his Democratic colleagues, engaged in shameless race-baiting, compared with which Lincoln's reservations about black equality seem mild. Lincoln argued that the question of black citizenship was a red herring, that the real issue before the public was slavery. Republicans believed slavery was wrong and should not be allowed to expand; Democrats did not believe slavery was wrong and would allow it to expand.

Memorably, Lincoln declared in the final debate:

> That is the issue that will continue in this country when these poor tongues of Judge Douglas and myself shall be silent. It is the eternal struggle between these two principles—right and wrong—throughout the world. They are the two principles that have stood face to face from the beginning of time, and will ever continue to struggle. The one is the common right of humanity, and the other the 'divine right of kings.' It is the same principle in whatever shape it develops itself. It is the same spirit that says, 'You work and toil and earn bread, and I'll eat it.' No matter in what shape it comes, whether from the mouth of a king who seeks to bestride the people of his own nation and live by the fruit of their labor, or from one race of men as an apology for enslaving another race, it is the same tyrannical principle.

Striner makes his case well, skillfully utilizing the work of such fine historians as James M. McPherson, LaWanda Cox, Harry V. Jaffa, and William Lee Miller. He could have strengthened his argument by citing defenses of Lincoln by thoroughgoing abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison and Owen Lovejoy. But he does quote Frederick Douglass's too-little-known 1865 speech in which the black orator called Lincoln "emphatically the black man's president, the first to show any respect for their rights as men."

Striner's readable account is not aimed at specialists, who will discover little new in it, but at the general reader, who will be impressed by the relentless way the author shows how relentless was Lincoln's struggle to end slavery. ♦

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Five Poets

On the landscape of time, place, history, and romance.

BY WYATT PRUNTY

The neoclassicist T.E. Hulme described romanticism as "spilt religion," while Harold Bloom says religion is "spilt romanticism." Who is right? Both, to judge by the poets considered here. The religious and romantic poles of agape and Eros define these five writers, as their worlds emerge from the amplitudes of place and people.

James Applewhite's *Selected Poems* traces a world ranging from the rural landscape of his South with its crossroads and tobacco to England's churches to the more universal subjects of time and children. "The Water-Machine" describes a river "infinitely divisible / Whose plastic mass knifed by snags rejoins / And rejoins, a divided whole always going." And this makes a good summary of Applewhite's own continuum as a writer, balanced by what in "Prayer for My Son" is put this way: "the psyche has its own / Fame, whether known or not, that / Soul can flame like feathers of a bird."

Perhaps the most compelling poems in this vein are two late ones in the collection, "A Distant Father" and "Interstate Highway." In the second of these, a poem dedicated to Applewhite's daughter, traffic, here a collective figure for us all, moves over a landscape much as a river might, "exiting and rejoining . . . so closely linked that, / if seen from above" it makes a "stasis of lights," and "the pattern we bead is constant." Constancy, no small matter, characterizes James Applewhite's poetry.

Selected Poems
by James Applewhite
Duke, 171 pp., $18.95

Midwest Eclogue
by David Baker
Norton, 96 pp., $23.95

As Long As It's Big
by John Bricuth
Johns Hopkins, 232 pp., $25

The Infinity Sessions
by T.R. Hummer
LSU, 94 pp., $19.95

Little Boats, Unsalvaged: Poems, 1992-2004
by Dave Smith
LSU, 74 pp., $17.95

David Baker's *Midwest Eclogue* is theft quality. Read it, you will buy it. Poets will want to have written it. The book's first poem, "Monarchs Landing and Flying," opens: "If they have come for the butterflies then / bless their breaking hearts, but the young pair is / looking nowhere except each other's eyes." An elegant and celebratory catalogue of butterflies follows before the poem returns to the young couple taking a taxi from sight. Turn the page, and the collection's second poem, "Hyper-," maintains the same stride: "Blue night descended our neighbor's blown hills. / And the calm that comes with seeing something / beautiful but far from perfect descended—." Later we are asked, "How many ways do we measure things by / what they're not."

This book is about what things *are*. Its poems open quietly, then torsion one's perspective in some surprising yet compelling way. The book's final poem, "White Heron Pond," ends asking us to see "the sure, slow / orbit of things / becoming / the next thing." Along the way to such a vision, readers encounter lines such as "O lunatic world. / O lunatic, swelling, flowering world" ("Bedlam"), "the irony of every cell: that it divides to multiply" ("The Spring Ephemerals"), "I have the horror of my neglect" ("White Violets and Coal Mine"). These are poems by a mature poet with a keen eye for limit and our struggles for renewal.

Baker's *Eclogue* explores a mostly pastoral setting, what he calls the "exurbs," the irony here being our tendency to crowd out life even as we desire to preserve it. But while vulnerable, Baker's world is resurgent too, by season, by generation, and by human choice. A daughter diagnosed with AD/HD grows beyond that frustration, as a husband and wife grow through the entanglements of plants in the yard, algae in the pond, illness, deer and developers, and the vicissitudes of neighbors.

Baker summarizes the passage of these and other events this way: "like the blossom / waste of the apples all over the ground, / it was less about plenty than goodness." In style *and* subject, there is some permanent goodness in this book.

As Long As It's Big by John Bricuth is a sequel to *Just Let Me Say This About That*. The earlier book is based on a presidential news conference with three reporters, Bird, Fox, and Fish, trying to wheedle the truth from a figure, referred to as Sir, who combines elements of God, the president, and everybody's father. Sir is not about to give the truth, admits he doesn't know it, so gives maxims instead: "better / To live in a house painted an ugly color / Than live in one that's right across the street." The book proceeds from slapstick to horror to Nietzschean laughter and is a tour de force.

As Long As It's Big resumes Sir's life, this time in the role of a divorce court judge, with Bird, Fox, and Fish present once again, two as lawyers and one a plaintiff. This time maxims are not enough. "Consolation" and "compensation" denied, "failure or success" matters less than that whatever happens is "big." One's "failure is ordinary" and comes on one "daily—through some dream of love." But then, following an encounter with a contemporary version of Wagner's

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Brünnhilde who leaves him nearly crushed to death by a murderous hug, the judge concludes, "*I, uh . . . think that I'm in love*." The gavel's given up, as with the collaboration of all good jokes, the audience is left to laugh incongruity to order.

T.R. Hummer's new collection, *The Infinity Sessions*, is a series of responses to jazz and the lives of the artists who made that music. The book opens with a quotation from Kierkegaard's account of Phalaris, who imprisoned people in a brazen bull placed over a fire: "[T]heir cries could not reach the tyrant's ears so as to strike terror into his heart; when they reached his ears they sounded like sweet music." This is the underlying principle of *The Infinity Sessions*, what in a poem entitled "Vapor," Hummer describes this way:

> *Far down inside the nucleus, just to the left of the quark—*
> *A little smaller and denser than color or charm, just possible*
> *For God to see if he wears his x-ray glasses—the particle called pain*
> *Chains its cold mutation in the structure of the double helix.*

Wallace Stevens tells us that "Death is the mother of beauty." Hummer says it is not death but suffering, and is found in the most ordinary places, in "days without attributes," or in "Junk Mail," which happens to be the title to one poem, or in the painful noise of squealing brakes heard as an "A-flat" by a woman with "perfect pitch" who also hears the "concert G, of the ambulance siren." Such is the nature of beauty, Hummer tells us, with diction and syntax meant to approximate the spontaneity of jazz melodies—a language running from whimsical to bluesy, fusing a poverty of setting with a stoical read of the future. Life continues, we are told, in a poem entitled "Random," when "The new soul starts to flicker. But we must not say it this way. / We avert our gaze."

The improvisations of a jazz musician are a way of averting one's gaze, an abridgment that renames and renews what otherwise is lost. This book lives by the angularity of jazz improvisation, but ends with the conviction of melody, what Schopenhauer would call "will-less knowing."

Dave Smith's latest volume, *Little Boats, Unsalvaged*, begins with the histories of family life and one's growing up. The rhythm of these accounts is pounded out of their texture, the insistence of catalogue pitted against the resistance of particulars. Smith catalogues in the tradition of Whitman, only does so more economically, and thus more powerfully, compressing details so they concentrate experience.

The historical importance of Whitman's articulation of American amplitude should not be confused with the aesthetic potential of what he began, perhaps especially where geographical focus is concerned; otherwise, we are xenophobic. Dave Smith, for example, writes about northern Italy, today *and* during World War II, especially Milan and the Lake Como area, where Mussolini was captured and killed.

Smith recollects history through small things—an antique German motorcycle left over from the war, for example. Or he listens to a group of scholars arguing over the division of Jerusalem, then tours the complex offerings of Milan Cathedral. Each instance is rich in harmonics, and in each case place condenses history. Texture turns into time. And human choice, tragic to beautiful, sticks out in landmarks like a movie set: "It's like the movies here, / old. Close, shocking, the way we find, astonished, a perfectly / preserved Nazi cycle and sidecar."

Then there are addresses to fellow writers—Bernard Malamud, Edwin Muir, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, William Matthews—articulated in poems by which Smith confronts the bookends of agape and Eros, here the shared love of writing versus the deaths of these five writers. As Smith puts it, "the penalty of place / applies anywhere we play with lines." Later, the book turns to other places, quail hunting, beagles crossing a busy highway disastrously, or a game played in Louisiana's state prison, Angola, called "Rodeo Poker," the title of the poem, a contest in which four men play cards with a bull let loose. The last one to run wins.

All of these poems have the element of contest about them, if we retain the Latin sense of *contestari*, to call to witness. That is, the witnessing of art is the subject here, as "Little Boats, Unsalvaged," Smith's title poem, makes clear: "Like a child I still climb in and wait to be lifted, flood tide cycling / in tiny waves that swell, take us unaware, the sprawl and soothe / of reed bed, wake bubbling anticipation, all we loved. *This. Now.*" Contest means the lines of games, furrows of a field, mortality and the choice to give oneself to something more than self. Here the contest is by lines of poetry, each "turn" to "return," as Smith's "Plowman" puts it, made from worlds that meet in memory and desire. This poem, which concludes the volume, is an important one to know.

As Wagner did with music, the poets reviewed here skip short arias for a less formal art that is more speech-based than melodic, more inclusive than distilled. The goal is amplitude, a gathering of particulars that is shaped certainly but also extensive, living in local time and place yet large enough to range from agape to Eros—and back. ♦

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The Golden State

A vision of the empire that became California.

BY ANTHONY DAY

California, like Rome, has always been a real empire bound forever to literary legend. Rome planted its origin firmly in the soil of Troy and its manly virtue in the filial piety of Aeneas. California sprang full-bodied from a bestselling Spanish romance in 1510, and has flourished in the cerebral imagination of its inhabitants as in the prodigious work of their hands and arms.

California
A History
by Kevin Starr
Modern Library, 370 pp., $24.95

The extent of each empire, though vast, can be summoned up in the broad strokes of a landscape spread upon a large canvas. Gibbon's opening chords of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* are justly celebrated for their elegiac salute to human achievement.

> In the second century of the Christian era, the Empire of Rome comprehended the fairest part of the earth, and the most civilised portion of mankind. The frontiers of that extensive monarchy were guarded by ancient renown and disciplined valour. The gentle but powerful influence of laws and manners had gradually cemented the union of the provinces. Their peaceful inhabitants enjoyed and abused the advantages of wealth and luxury. The image of a free constitution was preserved with decent reverence: the Roman Senate appeared to possess the sovereign authority, and devolved on the emperors all the executive powers of government.

Those stately 18th-century cadences have their distant but audible echo in Kevin Starr's comprehensive short history:

> On a clear day, photographed from a satellite, California appears as a serene palette of blue, green, brown, white, and red. This apparent serenity, however, masks a titanic drama occurring beneath the surface, in the clash of the two tectonic plates upon which California rests. California itself resulted from a collision of the North American and Pacific plates. Across a hundred million years, the grinding and regrinding of these plates against each other, their sudden detachments, their thrusts above or below each other—together with the lava flow of volcanoes, the bull-dozing action of glaciers, and, later, the flow of water and the depositing of alluvial soil—created a region almost abstract in its distinct arrangements of mountain, valley, canyon, coastline, plain, and desert. As the California-born philosopher and historian Josiah Royce observed, there is nothing subtle about the landforms and landscapes of California. Everything is scaled in bold and heroic arrangements that are easily understood.

There, already on page seven of Starr's 370-page book, you have it: Two words that come so naturally to Californians have already slipped out, "bold" and "heroic." Californians wear these concepts of themselves and their state, their kingdom, their empire, easily, as if born to them. Their self-assurance is often an irritation to other Americans, but what is a Californian to care? Just look at the record, the great picture of swift human achievement painted on that huge natural landscape!

Starr has devoted his life to telling the story, and in *California* he has gotten it down very well, both in broad strokes and revealing narrative detail.

The former state librarian and now university professor at the University of Southern California, Starr is the author of six volumes of his state's history in the *Americans and the California Dream* series. Those books were so interwoven with thick knots of digressions on California history that illuminated the main and sometimes hidden lines of his subject that, picking up this short summary, one had to wonder if, in it, the reader had lost more than he could have possibly gained.

The worry was unfounded. Granting that this book, one of the useful Modern Library Chronicle series of short history narratives, has strong elements of the quick survey college course, it remains thorough, fair, and meaty enough in the idea department to be both instructive and provocative.

Starr takes from Royce the main idea from which he hangs his complex, but lucid, tale. That son of the Gold Rush, born to an emigrant family in Grass Valley in 1855, developed as a professor of philosophy at Berkeley and Harvard his theory of a "Higher Provincialism," in which the American then encountering the "centralizing and alienating tendencies of mass society in the United States" could discover his American identity in a localized context.

In Starr's words:

> The physical context of California, Royce argued, specifically its topography and climate, was in the process of fostering a Higher Provincial version of American civilization that promoted simultaneously an independence of mind, individualism, an open simplicity of manner that might justifiably be described as Homeric, together with a benevolent closeness to nature fostered by a mild and nurturing climate. Such factors, among others were making California a distinctive instance of American civilization.

Not just distinctive but superior, is the theme that Starr embellished from Royce. It is all laid out, the gold and other mineral wealth, the deep rich soil and its bountiful agriculture, the energetic ambitious immigrants, the open-

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Bettmann / Corbis

First cable car in San Francisco, 1873

ness to new ideas, the limitless ambitions. Look at the University of California and the other schools, regard the flowering of science and technology and innovation that began with the hydraulic mining of the Gold Rush and continues through the fantastic flowering of cyberspace and its many-flowering inhabitants. Look at the movies and the pell-mell creation of mass culture, marvel at aviation and space exploration—there is little that the state has not done or contemplated doing.

As Starr points out over and over again, that something has not been done before is, in California, an incentive to, by all means, try it.

That Starr's tale has strong echoes of truly Virgilian heroic inevitability is not to say his great canvas comes out without shadows and storms. He acknowledges and explores the dark patches in the California story, some of which persist untamed and untended to this day: the treatment, for example, of Native Americans and blacks and some others of color. Yet as California becomes triumphantly a majority state of many colors, even those stains are fading.

For most of its history the state has ridden on a self-generated thrust of energy, but its development has not always been forward, not always in the political mode that came to be called, a hundred years ago, Progressive. Starr shows how the individualism of which he writes produces crankiness and deep conflict. Great corporations, led by the Southern Pacific Railroad, in the 19th century ruled and raped. While Northern California was an early seat of the union movement, Southern California, where the *Los Angeles Times* and its friends raised a bulwark against labor, kept it effectively out until the 1930s.

In its political coloration, California lagged behind the rest of the country. Starr points out that, until the 1960s, California was essentially a Republican state. Yes, he writes,

> [T]he New Deal came late to California, but social democratic New Deal thinking remained characteristic of the state for the next sixty years. Few, if any, states in the nation were sustaining by the 1990s such a full range of state-supported health and social welfare programs as was California. The 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education was still in effect, and as in the case of its social programs, few states could point to such a comprehensive state-supported education program.

The cause of this political orientation, Starr implies, is less the virtue of the state's citizens than the demands of their situation. A dynamic and rapidly growing population of 37 million must, in order to continue increasing and functioning well, organize itself as smoothly and efficiently as possible. Contemporary California is ruled more by necessity than ideology.

California voters tossed out Governor Gray Davis and installed in his place Arnold Schwarzenegger while Starr was finishing this book, and he, like everyone else, wonders what the election meant. Less than it appeared, events seem to be saying. At any rate, in the changeable history of California, Schwarzenegger is just another eccentric chameleon on the stage, not the portent of a major earthquake.

Starr closes his brisk survey with his own forecast about the future of the largest and—may one say so?—"the fairest part" of the Union, and "the most civilized portion" of its inhabitants. He concludes: "California, Royce noted, was a promise, but it was also a struggle for redemption in the face of failure."

Other regions of the country, Starr argues,

> [Had] long since become used to the idea that nothing was perfect, even the American dream, although, as native daughter Joan Didion was pointing out, they had a long way to go before they fully internalized such a limiting recognition.
>
> But they also had many advantages to work with: a blessed portion of the Pacific Coast, the freedoms and institutions of the American Republic, a polyglot, diversely talented and ambitious population, and a cumulative aspiration to a better life—a chance of breaking through, of finding a golden dream by the sea—that was continuing to bring people to these Pacific shores.
>
> Across the long years of California's existence in modern times under the jurisdictions of Spain, of Mexico, and of the United States—there have been cruelties, injustices and mistakes aplenty.
>
> But there has been an equally sustained persistence of what Josiah Royce called "the Hope of the Great Community, a place, a society in which the best possibilities of the American experiment can be struggled for and sometimes achieved."

Now, that is a true Californian speaking. ♦

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Life Scrutonized

The hard-won faith of a modern philosopher.

BY DAVID GUASPARI

Conservative political and moral ideas do not descend, by deduction, from abstract principles. They arise, bottom-up, from attempts to understand one's allegiances and debts of gratitude.

Roger Scruton's *Gentle Regrets*—essays on books, friends, opera, politics, pets, family—is a varied and graceful collection of such attempts. Though personal, and often passionate, they are "not a record of [his] *education sentimentale*, but an attempt to explain a particular conservative outlook"—one he characterizes as "love of what has been good to you, and forgiveness of what has not." Indeed, the topic that unifies these occasional pieces is love.

Gentle Regrets
Thoughts From a Life
by Roger Scruton
Continuum, 248 pp., $28.95

Scruton, much better known in England than in the United States, is a learned, witty, wide-ranging, prolific, and often dazzling writer, who has published serious books on aesthetics (especially architecture and music), sex (philosophy, not how-to), Wagner (combining the preceding interests), ethics, culture, and politics, as well as justly praised introductions to philosophy and its history, two novels, large quantities of the higher journalism, and a chamber opera.

He is also an "intellectual pariah" (*The Independent*) and "an object of fear and loathing among members of the British liberal establishment" (*The New Statesman*). That status provides material for self-deprecating comic turns. Scruton says, for example, that the *Salisbury Review*, of which he was the first editor, "helped a new generation of conservative writers to emerge" by giving them cover: "At last, it was possible to be a conservative and also to the *left* of something, to say, 'Of course, the *Salisbury Review* is beyond the pale . . . '"

A stab at practical politics ended farcically when his application to join the Conservative party's list of candidates attracted the scrutiny of a titled blue-haired lady: "I mentioned that I had founded the Conservative Philosophy Group. She made it clear that the conjunction of the two words 'conservative' and 'philosophy' was so absurd that she could only doubt the existence of such an organization." She then administered the *coup de grâce* by musing, "I suppose he could apply for this new European Parliament thing, could he?"

Pariahdom also leaves scars, which Scruton displays: Invited to give a paper to the Philosophy Society at the University of Glasgow, he learns on arriving that the philosophy department has called for a boycott of his talk. An external reviewer of academic promotions writes that he would have had no difficulty recommending Scruton's promotion based simply on his scholarly work—but the conservative opinion pieces Scruton had published in *The Times* made such a recommendation out of the question. Readers of this journal will be bemused, or aghast, to learn that Scruton finds American intellectual life, even in the universities, much more open to conservative ideas than British.

He might have turned into his father, a man consumed by disappointment and rage. Jack Scruton is introduced as a man who resented his son's having greater opportunities than himself, and his scattered appearances cast a shadow over the entire book. He resurfaces 70-odd pages later, when an essay titled "Growing Up With Sam" opens with unsettling black humor: Scruton's timid and downtrodden mother (whose first name is found only in the index) tells her children that she has exciting news. But "[i]t couldn't be that she had murdered Dad at last, since we'd seen him only an hour before." The news was a mongrel dog, soon to be named Sam. Because Jack—"seething," "an angry silence in the front room," with "a curse on his face"—intimidated the rest of the Scruton family into frightened solitudes, Sam became "the only body I hugged . . . with true and conscious emotion."

That emotion does not escape critical attention. Love for a pet is "questionable in an adult, unless confined to some quiet domestic corner where it threatens nothing in the web of human society." It can be an evasion, a substitute for the risks and responsibilities, the moral opportunities and moral perils, of human love. Scruton nonetheless becomes attached, in middle age, to a horse. It is providentially named Sam, and providentially leads him, at a fox hunt, to his second wife. (Fox hunting is one of the indictments against Scruton.)

With the birth of their son, inevitably named Sam, Scruton finally became part of a family. Sam's difficult birth filled him, too late, with compassion for his own mother, who had died of cancer more than 30 years before: "What I had reproached in my mother as timidity I remembered now as gentleness; what I had deplored as Puritanism I recalled as moral sense; what I had feared as anxiety I knew to be love—love baffled by my selfishness." A chance to reconcile with his father also came too late. Scruton admired Jack's fight to prevent planners and developers from despoiling his town, and came to see that the energy and

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ability whose thwarting had made him angry and bitter and dangerous now enabled him to fight this good fight.

The book's other extended story is of another partial reconciliation, Scruton's return to a "much amended" Anglicanism. "Stealing from Churches" begins with the melancholy comedy of tourists strolling the aisles of a church, their aesthetic (or anthropological) pleasures parasitic on the commitments of the handful of worshippers in the pews. Scruton argues briefly here, and at length elsewhere, that common culture, which defines and fulfills the basic human need for membership in a community, is at its core religious; and that, when religion declines, our only resources for meeting that need are the institutions of high culture, "part of the attempt—always necessary, and never successful—to make us at home in the world and to affirm our moral right to it."

The final essay, "Regaining my Religion," completes that thought. The great Victorian doubters, living in a society with still-vital religious institutions, could steal from churches, "patch[ing] up the social world, while leaving the ecclesiastical crenellations intact on top of it." That is no longer an option. But needing religion doesn't make it true. In *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Modern Culture*, Scruton put this as a brutal paradox—that "the falsehoods of religious faith reveal the truths that matter"—and endorsed the Confucian wisdom that offers not a metaphysics or a creed but the injunction "to live *as if* it matters eternally what we do."

Since writing those words, Scruton has groped toward religious belief, a journey he does not characterize in terms of religious doctrine or any other truth claims:

> The fact that the mass of mankind may be unable to live without religion . . . is no proof that the loss we have suffered is for each of us either unbearable or final, or that the loss is not offset by gains. In recent years I have constantly asked myself what I have lost. And by pondering my loss of faith I have steadily regained it, though in a form that stands at a distance from the old religion.

I suspect that a great deal of his religion is captured in a single sentence: "Regaining religion is a matter of preparation, a quiet waiting for grace."

Faith, Scruton says, is not a matter of assenting to certain propositions but "a transforming state of mind, a stance toward the world"—in particular, toward loss, the *basso ostinato* of human life. A Christian is enjoined not to cultivate a philosophical indifference to loss, but to transcend it. (Scruton's view of transcending loss by giving it the sacred character of sacrifice owes less, I'd say, to Christian orthodoxy than to his study of Wagner.) So *Gentle Regrets*—often touching, often charming, and often funny, serious but far from somber—appropriately concludes with the words of the 100th Psalm, the *Jubilate Deo*.

> *O, be joyful in the Lord . . .*
> *For the Lord is gracious, his mercy is*
> *everlasting: and his truth*
> *endureth from generation to generation.*

The radical impulse is oppositional: What is should not be. A conservative recognizes that civilized life depends on *pietas*, on givens that retain their benign power only so long as they are, precisely, given. He can criticize them "from the inside" in order to renew them and stave off their decay. Manning the barricades against assaults on *pietas* may be a duty but can't be a joy.

Scruton offers a parable in the story of his name. He was christened "Roger Vernon" and called Vernon (which Jack thought sissified)—until he farcically vanquished a schoolyard bully with an accidental blow and decided that Roger suited the new identity that victory conferred. He has, he says, spent much of his life pursuing Vernon's ends—books, music, art, the conservative impulse to *affirm*—by Roger's means. Many readers will wish them both well. ♦

Play Outside

Nature, nurture, and Nintendo.

BY WILLIAM F. PEDERSEN

This is a fuzzy and engaging book. It argues that we, and our children in particular, have increasingly lost contact both with nature and with reality itself—its slowly unfolding qualities of inexhaustible difference and surprise, its resistance to our efforts, its immense objectivity and its occasional danger. Ironically, Richard Louv contends, our increased exposure to abstract publicity about the environment reinforces our alienation from nature here and now. Louv calls this alienation "nature deficit disorder" and sees greater and more frequent immersion in the non-human world as its cure.

Last Child in the Woods
Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder
by Richard Louv
Algonquin, 336 pp., $24.95

He does not mean immersion in pristine wilderness, believing (correctly, in my parental experience) that children do not respond much to epic landscapes. Instead, he stresses meadow edge or tide pool-level experience. He contends that children develop best through absorption on their own terms in a world that is distinctly "other," with as few boundaries as possible. Louv argues that "destructive" activities like building a treehouse should therefore be allowed, as should hunting and fishing, even at some necessary risk of injury. He envisions local action that

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takes a small-town America that certainly never quite existed as the pattern for child- and nature-centered ecotopias.

Last Child has no discernible ideological agenda beyond these points. It barely mentions the federal government. Indeed, it has nothing critical to say about anyone—from conservative Christians to truly radical environmentalists—who might support its broad agenda. Even a proposal for mandatory geographic redistribution of the population in proportion to the government-determined "ecological carrying capacity" of different landscapes provokes only equivocal dissent.

Most readers will be sympathetic to Louv's vision. But Louv does not come close to demonstrating its benefits. Much of the book consists of interviews either with proponents of his cause, who describe their successes in establishing nature-based communities or education programs, or with the authors of equally nature-oriented professional studies in fields like child development. Such anecdotal descriptions prove little without a careful survey of opposing facts and arguments. Cautionary statements that the research described is "controversial," or "not strictly scientific," or "in its infancy and easily challenged" punctuate Louv's discussion. Beyond a few perfunctory references to Wordsworth, Thoreau, and other canonical authors, no arguments based on history, literature, philosophy, or personal experience balance these analytic defects.

There are many reasons for lost contact with nature. They include too much time spent passively absorbing television, computer games, the Internet, and recorded music; school pressures; too much organized sports; more time spent driving from one place to another; and the banning or restriction of risky or environmentally destructive outdoor play (like treehouse-building) by local governments, particularly in "membership" communities. Once again, the approach is anecdotal: To show that communities in general are restricting outdoor play, the book describes a handful of communities that have done this. Many of the trends that *Last Child* deplores, like more time spent driving or watching video screens, or more fear of lawsuits, rise out of fundamental technical and social changes. But the book's lack of edge, combined with its fuzzy affirmative case, robs us of any clear view of these forces and, therefore, of any realistic plan for overcoming them.

Louv lives in San Diego, one of the 25 most biologically diverse areas of the world, according to the United Nations. He refers briefly to relatively unsuccessful efforts to get San Diego schools to focus their nature education on these treasures in their backyard, and to his apparently more successful efforts to get the city to set aside as an urban park the interlocked canyons that lace its territory. A more detailed description of these efforts would have had interest in itself, and would have required a focused discussion of such opposing forces.

Last Child's broad-brush approach also robs us—more fundamentally—of any sophisticated probing of Louv's basic thesis itself. Yet that thesis invites examination from at least three angles.

First, is deprivation of nature the basic cause of any current slippage away from reality? Complaints about artificial education began long before the industrial age, and television might exercise its own reality-depriving influence quite apart from the time it takes from nature.

Next, if our contact with reality is indeed fraying, is more contact with nature the only cure? This world has many realities and many paths to them. Absorption in sports, or military service, or growing up in a close family, a complex ethnic or regional culture, or a traditional religion—or even a big city—could quite plausibly give as strong a sense of the real world as growing up immersed in nature. Dickens's kaleidoscopic descriptions of London's streets and people are far more tightly observed than his rather conventional evocations of country life.

Finally, Louv regularly assumes that immersing children even in some small slice of nature would make them advocates for environmental protection in all its forms. This will be so for some. Universal friends of the outdoors from Thoreau to Annie Dillard did some of their best work in the presence of railroad tracks or barbed wire. But many country people, now and in the past, have loved their own landscape and had little interest in "preservationist" changes, however justified, that might impair their use of it.

Louv describes, with some horror, children in Northern California who appreciate nature by riding through it on all-terrain vehicles. The resulting attachment seems genuine in some cases and the children certainly no worse than those 19th-century hunters who shot everything in sight. One might speculate that a combination of technical progress and use restrictions could make this practice more benign while preserving the natural experience, just as animals are no longer hunted to extinction in America. But *Last Child* does not address such complex and debatable possibilities.

Many readers will find the prospect of a more sensually immediate grasp of the natural world as attractive as I do. But, in *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, Oliver Sacks told of a young medical student who, after drug abuse, woke up able to smell as well as a dog. He encountered "a world overwhelmingly concrete, of particulars . . . a world overwhelming in immediacy, in immediate significance." Adrift in sensations, he had trouble pursuing his medical studies until, three weeks later to his partial regret, his new perceptions faded.

This story tells us that even deciding what constitutes education into humanity—much less achieving it—is a complex and multifaceted task. *Last Child in the Woods* reminds us of one probable element in that equation, but falls far short of resolving the problem. ♦

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Bamboozled

Spike Lee thriller: a contradiction in terms.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

A new thriller called *Inside Man* is getting the best press of any movie so far this year, which at first seems almost as absurdly implausible as the film itself.

Inside Man is an inconsequential jape about a bank robbery that isn't really a bank robbery. It starts well, with an opening half-hour that borrows liberally from several sensationally effective 1970s movies that were also set in New York City. The police response to the robbery has been lifted wholesale from Sidney Lumet's peerless *Dog Day Afternoon*. Denzel Washington takes the part played by Walter Matthau in the woefully underappreciated *The Taking of Pelham One Two Three*—a world-weary, seen-it-all cop who knows there's something fishy about a robbery carried out by very intelligent men who seem to have chosen to trap themselves in a situation from which there is no clear escape. The entertaining banter between the cops, which is by far the most enjoyable aspect of *Inside Man*, is still a pale knockoff of the hilarious scenes between Matthau and his coworkers in *The Taking of Pelham One Two Three*.

If you're going to steal, you might as well steal from the best, and these are two of the best American movies of the past 30-odd years. Unfortunately, once the Xeroxing is finished, *Inside Man* has to move forward on its own, and it sputters and meanders for an hour or so before it self-destructs like a Rube Goldberg machine.

Inside Man
Directed by Spike Lee

We learn early on that the bank robbers aren't after what's in the vault, but a secret stash elsewhere in the bank that nobody knows about. So far, so good. But we never get an explanation of just how it is that the robbers know about the secret stash and its location. And the big secret itself makes no sense, because there's no reason on earth the owner of the stash would have kept it around rather than simply throwing it into the Hudson River.

All thrillers are implausible, but we are willing to accept the implausibility as long as the twists and turns make logical sense. What, then, are we to make of *Inside Man*'s villain, who tells a confidant in one scene that he will never discuss his secret stash, and then later on turns into Basil Exposition (from the *Austin Powers* movies), laying out the ludicrous backstory in excruciating detail to the very same confidant? This isn't just bad storytelling; it's incompetent storytelling.

So what could possibly account for the delirious critical attention to *Inside Man*? Simple. Critics are grading on a curve. Why? Because *Inside Man* was directed by the once-incendiary has-been Spike Lee, who is attempting a major career turnaround by taking this job-for-hire from Imagine Entertainment, the A-list production company responsible for Ron Howard's movies.

During the years in which race was the foremost issue in American cultural politics, Lee proved himself a marketing genius with a special talent for commercializing controversy. He seemed to have a preternatural gift for locating a hot button—black-on-black racism in *School Daze*, race war in *Do the Right Thing*, an interracial romance in *Jungle Fever*, the myriad glories of *Malcolm X*. Unfortunately for Lee, once he pressed the hot button, he had no idea what to do with it. Lee has always been an uncommonly amateurish director, with a taste for awkward camera shots, a tendency to drag scenes out to intolerable length, and a regrettable propensity for forcing his characters to deliver soapbox speeches that might just as well have been run off on a Gestetner machine at the concession stand, and left on the theater's seats for the audience to peruse at its leisure.

But because Lee was the first young black film director to win an audience, the critical commentary on his work was alternately smug and terrified— an exquisite combination of patronizing condescension and wannabe hipness. Lee had a free ride for a decade, but a series of unspeakably awful movies (*He Got Game*, *Girl 6*, *Bamboozled*, *She Hate Me*) made it impossible for even the most diversity-mad critics to offer him much in the way of praise. Lee's career was also brought to a standstill by the unexpected, and heartening, way peace broke out in New York City and other urban centers as a result of the crime drop of the 1990s. The prophet of racial doom didn't have much of moment to say, and seemed to fade from view.

Now, like his friend Al Sharpton, Spike Lee is trying to clean up his act and show he can play ball with the big boys. He throws no bombs in *Inside Man* (which was written not by him but by someone named Russell Gewirtz). Like the cops in the movie, Lee is only shooting rubber bullets during the painfully stilted moments when his characters confront the racial divide.

The problem is that what was true about Spike Lee in 1987 is true in 2006: He was a lousy filmmaker to begin with, and he's a lousy filmmaker today. *Inside Man* is intended to be a crowd pleaser, but its plotting failures make it more likely that audiences will be infuriated rather than pleased with it. No matter what critics say. ♦

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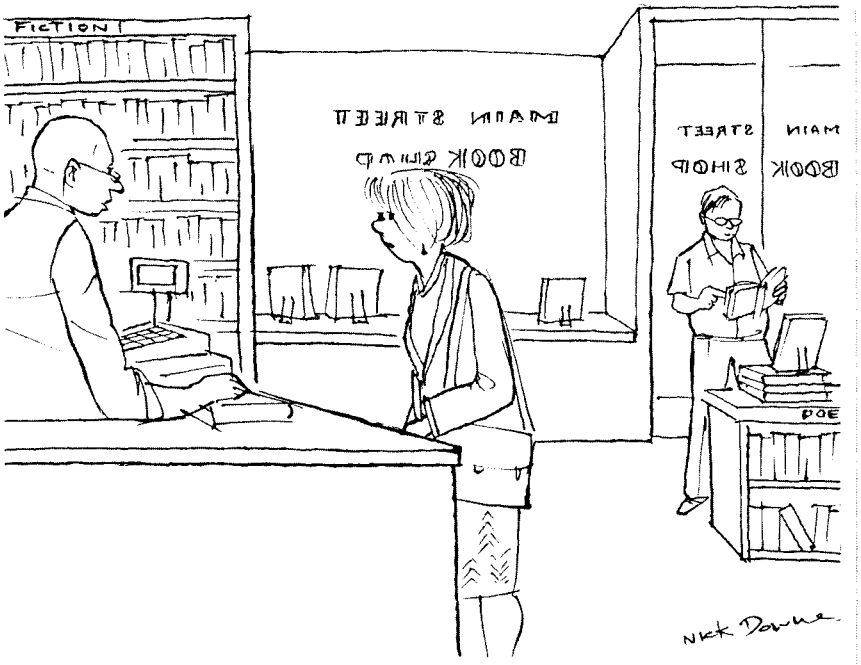

"Love and marriage are in two separate sections."

Books in Brief

Beyond Glory: Joe Louis vs. Max Schmeling, and a World on the Brink **by David Margolick (Knopf, 432 pp., $26.95).** No sport employs hype more than boxing. There have been many self-proclaimed "Fights of the Century," but the greatest was the second Louis-Schmeling bout in June 1938. Now David Margolick seeks to place this famous grudge match in historical perspective.

Joe Louis emerged as a heavyweight contender when boxing was in the doldrums following the sport's golden era in the 1920s. Margolick describes him as an exciting fighter with a devastating punch who waded through the ranks of the heavyweight contenders with ease before he was 21. He also was an African American in a still segregated nation.

Schmeling was a former heavyweight champion when he met Louis in 1936. Louis was thoroughly beaten with the bout culminating in a twelfth-round knockout. The clamor for a rematch began immediately.

Louis and Schmeling are made to represent their respective countries. America, in the midst of the Great Depression, needed new heroes like Louis. Schmeling had to carry the burden of Adolf Hitler's Nazi regime, although Margolick believes Schmeling "was never Nazi Max." But the Nazis exploited Schmeling, arguing that his defeat of Louis proved their racist theories.

The American boxing community adopted Louis because a great heavyweight was needed to revive a sport dead since the retirement of Jack Dempsey. Despite this, Louis was viewed by sports writers as ignorant. The writer Paul Gallico admired Louis, but described him as living "like an animal, untouched by externals. Is he all instinct, all animal? Or have a hundred million years left a fold upon his brain?" The Hearst papers were worse. They referred to Louis as America's "pet pickaninny."

Given the background of the two nations it is easy to see the Louis-Schmeling conflict as a clash of democracy versus tyranny, a cliché Margolick wisely avoids.

Louis's rematch with Schmeling was the most ballyhooed fight since the second Dempsey-Tunney bout. For the Nazis, another Schmeling victory would be a propaganda bonanza. To many Americans, it would be a bloody nose for Hitler. Louis's devastating knockout of Schmeling in one round was cheered throughout the nation, especially in the black community. No other black celebrity had captured their enthusiasm as did Louis. Not only was he a great heavyweight champion, but, by regularly beating whites, he also vindicated black hopes for equality.

In the long run, who really won? After a twelve year reign, Louis wound up broke. He was in and out of mental hospitals the rest of his life and ended his career as a greeter at a Las Vegas casino.

Schmeling became a millionaire through ownership of a Coca-Cola dealership and was postwar Germany's most popular sports hero. He remained close to Louis because their friendship helped lift the Nazi stigma from him.

Margolick's study is overlong and is drawn almost exclusively from newspaper and magazine articles. There are some questionable assertions, such as the Nazis pushing Schmeling to fight because Germany was short of hard currency. This will come as a surprise to those nations smashed by the blitzkrieg in 1939-40.

Yet, overall, Margolick has produced a fine study of a brutal sport that casts insights into America in the last years of the Great Depression.

—John P. Rossi

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Parody

"Are you an intellectually curious student at an American college or graduate school? Here's your once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to win a reporting trip to the developing world with Pulitzer Prize-winner Nicholas D. Kristof, Op-Ed and TimesSelect columnist. One extraordinary winner will be chosen to accompany Nick on an all-expenses-paid reporting odyssey to the African continent this summer. It won't be comfortable—in fact, it will most likely be incredibly grueling. But what you see will open your eyes ... [and] you won't merely be Nick's traveling companion."

—Full-page ad in the* New York Times, *March 19

July 26, 2006 – I'm, like, literally stunned by my good luck. Here I am, two whole months out of Wesleyan, and I'm literally Ms. Foreign Correspondent – coming to a theater near you – and in Africa, no less, with Nick, who is really super and actually quite nice. He keeps telling me that, like, he learned early on in his career that the real stories in Africa can be found in the details, and that's why he trusts me to make all the reservations and hire the drivers and translators and stuff and keep track of everything because that way I'll know the angle for a story when I see it. I told him the course I took on Orientalism sophomore year really showed how colonial attitudes really messed up Africa, maybe forever, with the tribes and borders and everything, and Nick thinks that's an amazing point I should put in the "nut graf" when I do the blog tonight.

July 27 – I think I really impressed Nick when I said that Americans don't realize there's more to this continent than, like, Meryl Streep and Out of Africa. He said he wanted to use some of my ideas for his column on Tuesday and so I wrote down most of what I said on the video blog after I got Nick's credit card activated and talked to the hotel guy about setting up Nick's Internet access. He said it was interesting stuff, nothing goofball, and would go straight into his piece unedited! He also said that I have a very sophisticated view of these problems for somebody my age and I told him he had been, like, super nice in helping me understand what's going on in Africa.

July 28 – I think Nick's right that, as a woman, I'm just a whole lot better at taking care of the computer glitches and, like, charming the locals and capturing some of the emotion in these amazing situations as well as paying the bills and staying in touch with the pilot. Nick said he wasn't feeling well this morning and asked if I could, like, "sit in" for him when the blog gets going. Of course I said yes! None of my guy friends at Wesleyan would have trusted me to do anything even remotely like that, but Nick thinks the only way to be a reporter, even in [illegible] get out and pound the pavement – even though there isn't much [illegible]e – and flood the zone with pieces while Nick talks to people in bars [illegible]taurants. I joked with him about his pith helmet and he said he couldn't see my eyes because I was wearing my Paris Hilton sunglasses, so I took off

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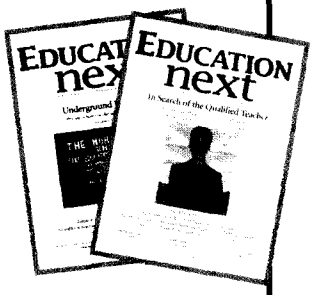

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In the new issue of *Education Next*

Florida's Program to End Social Promotion

Does retention help low-scoring third graders?

Holding children back in the same grade for an additional year has long been frowned on by schools, with a large body of research seemingly supporting the view that low-scoring retained students drop out at higher levels than low-scoring students who are not retained. However, eschewing old habits and old research, several large school systems, which between them enroll nearly 20 percent of the nation's third-grade students, have been steadily bucking convention and discouraging or even forbidding social promotion. Is this new approach effective? Findings from Florida suggest that the use of standardized testing policies to end social promotion can help low-performing students make modest improvements in reading and substantial improvements in math.

—Jay Greene and Marcus Winters

The Virtual Revolution

Understanding online schools

For better or worse, the Internet is beginning to liberate education from the confines of traditional time and space. As of November 2005, the North American Council for Online Learning listed 157 unique online learning programs in 42 states, including 32 virtual charter schools, 3 online home-school programs, and programs in 53 public, non-charter virtual schools. What do schools without class periods, grade levels, six-hour school days, or 180-day school years look like? Do they use buildings, have classrooms, remain part of districts? How do they help children learn? As technology continues its headlong leap to new frontiers and as we understand more about what works (and what doesn't), education technology will continue to expand and evolve.

—Randall Greenway and Gregg Vanourek

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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How much do you "tip" your cable TV company every month?

The answer will shock you.

The vast majority of Americans don't have a real choice in television.[1]

That's why they pay more.

How much more? A January report from Bank of America Equity Research says in places that allow competition, prices have dropped 28 to 42%.[2]

Do the math — that's an extra $20 a month on a $60 cable bill. It's like having to tip the cable company for the privilege of not having a real choice.

Fortunately, that might change. Congress is considering a proposal to give people a new choice to traditional cable TV.

To make your voice heard, call 1-888-346-1400 or visit www.wewantchoice.com.

1. *Evidence shows that the presence of another wireline operator is critical to effective competition. The General Accounting Office found that* DBS (satellite) competition causes only "a slight reduction" in cable prices while "competition from a second wire-based operator appears to significantly lower cable prices." GAO-04-8: Issues Related to Competition and Subscriber Rates in the Cable Television Industry, October 2003.
2. In areas where wireline competition has been introduced, the incumbent cable provider cut prices between 28-42%. "Battle for the Bundle: Consumer Wireline Services Pricing," Bank of America Equity Research, January 23, 2006.

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